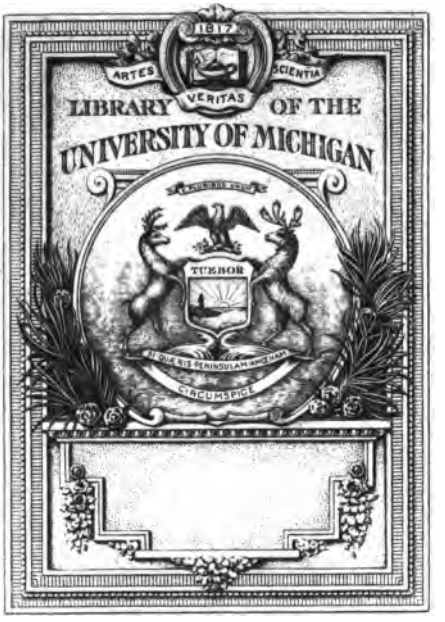
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ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHIES OF

THE GREAT ARTISTS.

SIR PETER PAUL RUBENS.

RUBENS.

From the painting by himself in the Uffizi Gallery.

"The whole world without Art would be one great wilderness."

RUBENS

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PREFACE.

HORACE WALPOLE once said that it was necessary to read twenty books in order to write a life of Rubens. Since Walpole's days books have multiplied and historical documents have been discovered, arranged and calendared, in every capital of Europe. In order to write a complete life of Rubens now, it would be necessary to search through an immense mass of documents at the Hague, Brussels, Paris, Simancas, Vienna, and Mantua, besides carefully examining our own records. Neither time nor space would allow of this, if I had had the opportunity in other ways. All I have here attempted has been to give a *résumé* of the facts discovered by others, a very large number of which have not only never appeared in English, but have not even been brought together until now.

Rubens has suffered from his twofold character and his polyglot acquirements. But few persons are interested alike in his artistic and his diplomatic career. I have wished to give a due weight to each view of his character as far as the limited space at my disposal would allow. The immense number of his works, covering enormous spaces of canvas, the multiplicity of his knowledge of lite-

rature and antiquities, and the complicated interests with which his political career was interwoven, make it exceedingly difficult to bring a clear, comprehensive, accurate and interesting account of this great life within a small space. I have endeavoured to do this to the utmost of my ability.

The dates throughout are given in the New Style, which was then in use on the Continent, though not in England.

C. W. K.

London, October, 1879.

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RUBENS.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND BIRTH.

1577 TO 1587.

THE once-famous city of ANTWERP arose with the increase of knowledge and civilization of the sixteenth century, and for many years, under the rule of the Emperor Charles V., was the most prosperous and wealthy metropolis in Europe.

The geographical discoveries of that time had deprived the Mediterranean of her supremacy: the great commercial cities of Italy—Venice and Genoa—had lost their monopoly of trade intercourse with the East, and Antwerp—*An t' werf*, on the wharf, on the banks of the Scheldt—arose in all its grandeur. "No city except Paris," says Mr. Motley, "surpassed it in population, nor approached it in commercial splendour. Its government was very free. The sovereign as Marquis of Antwerp was solemnly sworn to govern according to ancient charter and laws." "The city itself was the most beautiful in Europe. Placed upon a plain along the bank of the Scheldt, shaped like a bent bow with the river for its string, it enclosed within its walls some of the most splendid edifices of Christendom. The world-renowned

church of Notre Dame, the stately Exchange where five thousand merchants daily congregated—prototype of all similar establishments throughout the world—the capacious mole and port . . . were all establishments which it would have been difficult to rival in any other part of the globe."

But all that the new commerce of the world—which now extended round Africa to India, and to the new Indies in the West—had thus created, was destroyed by fanaticism and the fierce contest of the old religion against the advance of modern thought and freedom. In 1564, at the execution of a renegade monk, a religious outburst of persecutions began which included the Ommegang[1] riots, the persecutions of the Duke of Alva, the building of the citadel, and finally the siege of Antwerp.

Amongst the many thousands who on the approach of Alva found their position in the city no longer tenable was Meester Jan Rubens, one of the *schepenen* or aldermen, who on the last day of August in 1568 appeared before the burgomaster, schepenen and council, with certain trusty friends—former burgomasters and others, to obtain a certificate of irreproachable conduct in his office.

This Jan Rubens was the son of a respectable tradesman, Bartholomew Rubens, an apothecary, descended from a family who had been tanners for many generations past. Jan's father had given him a good education. At the age of twenty-four he had been sent to study law at Rome, where after some seven years he took his degree as Doctor of Laws. From Rome he returned to his native town, and

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[1] A religious procession in which a colossal figure of the Virgin was borne round the city.—MOTLEY'S *Dutch Republic*, vol. i. p. 54.

in May, 1562, he was made schepen. A short time previously he had married Maria, daughter of Henry Pypelincx (or Pypeling), of Antwerp, by whom he had several children. In the same year Prince William of Orange, called the Silent, married at Leipzig, Anne of Saxony, daughter of the Archduke Maurice.

Jan Rubens had been denounced as a Calvinist by a secret agent of Spain: and when Alva left Madrid to take command in the Netherlands, he thought it more prudent to retire to Cologne, where he could keep up communication with the Prince of Orange, who had already endeavoured to enlist him on his side. At Cologne he met with Councillor Jan Bets, an old acquaintance, already employed by Anne of Saxony to negotiate for the return of her dowry, which had been confiscated by Philip II. with the rest of her husband's property. Jan Rubens was nominated Councillor by Prince William, and, whilst Bets attended the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse, Rubens became the adviser of the Princess, between whom and her husband—unlike as they were in all respects—but little sympathy existed. For two years William was away in the country which he was to consolidate into the Dutch Republic; and it was during his absence that she fell into a disgraceful intrigue with Jan Rubens, which, in spite of undeniable evidence, she refused to acknowledge.

For two years was this disgraceful intrigue carried on unsuspected by the injured consorts on either side. At length, owing to information they had received, the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse sent for Jan Rubens. Ignorant of their discovery of his delinquency, he left his wife in Cologne and journeyed into Nassau. Here he was met and immediately thrown into prison in the fortress

of Dillenburg; and so closely was he confined, that for some time his wife could not discover where he was. She wrote letter after letter, appealing at length to the Elector himself, and then for the first time she discovered the offence and the punishment. By German law Rubens's life was forfeited, but the honour of a noble house was a more powerful advocate for him than his own deserts or his wife's pleadings. It was in vain, however, that his wife begged to see him: and it was not till 1575 that brighter prospects opened before them, and that she obtained leave from Count John of Nassau to visit her husband. She then removed with her servant and her goods to Dillenburg. Here the long separated couple met, but the husband was in a sad plight; the harshness of his imprisonment had enfeebled his health. Still the wife's petitions to the Count did not cease, and at last she obtained her desire that her husband might be allowed to dwell outside the hateful prison. On condition that he should confess his crime anew, and on giving his own and his wife's bond for 6,000 thalers that he would return to prison if called upon to do so, and that he would not go beyond the limits of the little village, he was allowed to take up his residence at Siegen in Westphalia, where he would be under the surveillance of the Count's officers. The least infringement of the bond was to be punished by death and confiscation of goods. After much trouble on the part of Maria Rubens the caution money was paid, a house with a vegetable garden was hired, and at length, on the 10th of May, Whit Sunday, 1575, "when Christians celebrate the descent of the True Comforter," as Rubens phrased it, he was released.

Once only was Jan Rubens allowed to stir from

this retired village. The political changes in Antwerp afforded an opportunity for the recovery of some of the confiscated property, but in order to avail himself of this chance, it was necessary that he should appear in person or by attorney. The seal of such a small community as that of Siegen would not be recognized even at Cologne, much less at Antwerp. He obtained leave, therefore, to go and stay for a few days in the house of a cousin, Raymond, at Cologne, in order to obtain a power of attorney for a relation to act on his behalf. This done he was to return to his family at Siegen.

Soon after this journey of Jan Rubens to Cologne, in the year 1577, and probably on the 29th of June—the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul,[1]—was born the great painter Peter Paul Rubens, thus named after the saints whose supposed martyrdom together at Rome was commemorated on that day.

Of the fact that our painter was born at Siegen, and not at Antwerp or Cologne, there is now but little doubt. M. Backhuizen van der Brink, in his two pamphlets, "Het Hawelijk van Willem van Oranje mit Anna van Saxen," and "Les Rubens à Siegen"—from which the greater part of the foregoing particulars has been taken—has proved that Jan Rubens was only once away from Siegen until his final release; that Maria Rubens was at Siegen on the 20th of June, 1577; that though there are no records at Siegen of so early a date, neither is there any ascertained evidence of Peter Paul's birth elsewhere. And although Philip Rubens, the painter's nephew, in his life of his uncle —written in Latin—says that he was born at Cologne, the

[1] Though the 27th, 28th, and even a date in May are mentioned.

whole of the Siegen episode was kept so completely a secret from all but those who were necessarily acquainted with it, as probably to be unknown even to Philip Rubens the elder, the father of the biographer.

Let us now for a moment cast a glance at the condition of Europe at the time this infant, hereafter to make his influence felt in councils of States, and in the realms of art, first saw the light; for certainly he was one on whom the external world left a vivid impress, and who in his turn left his mark on the world around him. In the Spanish Netherlands, his father's and his own future home, the cold, cruel, bloody Alva had been unsuccessful, and had paid the penalty of his failure—having been recalled and imprisoned by the equally cold and cruel Philip II. His successor, De Requescens, after a milder government of three years, was dead. Then in the beautiful, rich, and sorely-tried city of Antwerp, the home of commerce and of Calvinism, broke forth that fearful butchery and pillage—the "Spanish Fury." The troops that had long been employed in carrying out Philip's determination to crush the freedom of the continental race most nearly allied to our own, and to compel them to bow down to the fiercest form of Papal domination, had not received the reward of their labours, their privations, and their crimes. It was never easy for the Spaniard to procure money in the Netherlands, unless he took it by force. These troops had learnt too well the lesson their master had taught them. They would make the rich Flemings pay what Philip owed. Before the new governor of the Netherlands, Don John of Austria, arrived, the soldiers broke out in mutiny, poured forth from the citadel of Antwerp—the monument of Alva's determination to domi-

neer over all liberty—seized the town, massacred multitudes of peaceful merchants and defenceless creatures of all ages, carried off enormous plunder, burnt and destroyed at least as much more, and committed enormities which, combined with their after-proceedings, made the name of Spaniard for many generations more hateful to all those nations that speak Low German than that of any other race bearing mortal shape. The Provinces now really United through detestation of this "Spanish Fury," succeeded in procuring the expulsion of the soldiery guilty of these crimes, and Antwerp was at last freed from foreign military.

The great Prince of Orange, William the Silent, whom Jan Rubens had so fatally injured, sat majestically, like a statue by Michelangelo, in the two small provinces of North and South Holland—those two half submerged sand-banks which every day threatened to disappear altogether, but which nevertheless had been defended by their amphibious inhabitants against all the power of the greatest sovereign of the time. Surely his silence was golden; he was biding his time until the ripe fruit, that was maturing in the other fifteen provinces, should fall to his share.

In England, too, there was a calm. Elizabeth was ruling fearlessly and wisely, nursing her strength for future troubles, journeying to various parts of her kingdom, taking counsel with that band of far-sighted statesmen who were assembled around a throne more powerful in the possession of a woman than it ever had been, or ever was to be, for three hundred years. Mary of Scotland had been in prison as long as Jan Rubens had been away from Antwerp. Her kingdom was administered in the name of her son, in no more disorderly manner than it had usually been in generations past.

In France Charles IX. and his Italian mother Catherine de' Medici had had their St. Bartholomew's Day, and still the Huguenots were obliged to be tolerated. Charles was dead—his brother, Henry III., had succeeded, and peace reigned where bloodshed had been rife.

In the Escurial sat the cruel spider, "the King of Spains and Indies," the subjugator of Asia, Africa, and America, more papistical than the Pope, more tyrannical than Tiberius, watching his webs, which reached to the ends of the earth, and whose slightest vibration was felt at their secluded centre; neither enjoying life himself, nor willing that others should live and love and worship but as he chose, and as he thought right.

In the more placid realm of art, events of different character were happening. Not quite a year before the birth of Peter Paul Rubens occurred the death of Titian, who carried men's memories back for a century. Born before Raphael, he had survived him for as long a period as would make the life of an elderly man. Now he, too, dropped the brush he had used up to the last, which was to be taken up by Guido Reni, a child less than a year old, and by Rubens, who was not born until ten months later. Michelangelo Buonarroti had died about twelve years before, and the schools of Rome, of Florence, and of Venice had at this time no very great names to bring them into eminence. In the disturbed condition of the political world, Art had not much opportunity, and it was awaiting calmer days before putting forth its next great efforts.

When Peter Paul was but a year old, the Rubens family returned to Cologne. Here they are said to have lived in a small house, No. 10, Sternen Gasse (Star Lane,), where one more child, Bartholomew, was born. On one of the

doorposts of this house, a tablet of black marble still declares in gilt letters that the famous painter was born there; whilst another, on the corresponding post, with greater ground for credibility, proclaims the fact that Maria, daughter of Francesco I., and grand-daughter of Cosmo the Great, the first Duke of Tuscany, wife of Henry IV. of France, and mother of Louis XIII., King of France, of Henrietta Maria, Queen of England, and Elizabeth, Queen of Spain, died there in exile, and in comparative poverty. She who was born under those warm Italian skies, which had cherished her family until it became great; who had married the greatest of French kings; and who had, in the days of her grandeur, summoned Rubens to adorn the walls of the Luxembourg Palace, which she had erected, at last found an asylum in the very house where, as an exile (if one may call him so) from a home he had never seen, the artist had spent the first few years of a life which was to end in success and splendour. "I have a great affection for Cologne, where I was brought up until I was ten years of age," he writes, when approaching the end of his life.

Towards the conclusion of that period of ten years, on the 18th of March, 1587, Jan Rubens died. He was buried with some pomp in the church of St. Peter, closely adjoining the house he had lately inhabited; and his widow erected a tablet to his memory, which served to conceal, until a few years ago, the fact of his delinquencies, and their punishment, and the residence of his family at Siegen.[1]

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[1] The widow's record declares that he went into voluntary exile, and "retired with all his family to Cologne, *and there abode for nineteen years*," and that "Maria Pypelinga the wife, the mother of his seven children, with whom he lived for twenty-six years happily, without any quarrel, erected 'the monument' to her sweetest and well deserving husband."

Three of the children were already dead. Clara, the second daughter, had been the first to leave a vacant place in the family circle, in 1580; and then, in 1583, two more —Henry, a boy of sixteen, and Bartholomew, a child of two. Seeing that there was an interval of seven years between Philip and his next elder brother—an interval afterwards increased by the death of that brother—and imagining how the elder children, now of an age to be cautious, would be warned by the careful mother not to allude to the episode of Siegen, we can well understand how Philip, in perfect good faith, might describe himself to the authorities at Antwerp as born at Cologne.

CHAPTER II.

PETER PAUL'S EDUCATION AND MASTERS.

1588 TO 1600.

IN 1588, the year following the death of Jan Rubens, his widow returned to her native city. Her reason for this step was to recover the property which had been confiscated in the absence of her husband and herself, first by one party and then by the other. As a suspected Calvinist, Jan Rubens's goods were seized by the Spanish party; as an emigrant, a deserter of his country in her sorest need, he gained no advantage when the Reformed party obtained power. The Antwerp to which Maria Rubens returned was very different from the great and rich commercial city she had left. The effects of the Ommegang disturbances she knew, but since then there had been the "Spanish Fury." This had driven away both commerce and merchants to Amsterdam and other places. Another crushing blow followed. Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma—son of that Margaret who in the earlier days of Philip had been his Regent, and who had helped to fasten the epithet of "Beggars" (les Gueux) upon the popular party—had succeeded the Duke John, who, like De Requescens, had succumbed under the difficulties of his post.

Bit by bit Brabant had been won back to the King's party. Antwerp alone stood out. "Antwerp was a small republic —in time of peace intelligently and successfully administered, which in the season of a great foreign war, amid plagues, tumults, famine, and internal rebellion, required the firm hand and the clear brain of a single chief. That brain and hand had been possessed by Orange alone." This Prince had been assassinated in July, 1584.

In the same year the siege of Antwerp by the Duke of Parma was begun; it was carried on through the winter; the Scheldt was bridged over and blockaded, and though the citizens sent forth

"The fiery keel at Antwerp's bridge,"[1]

and tried hard to

"Chase the Prince of Parma from our land,"

still they were unsuccessful, and on the 17th of August, 1585, the city capitulated.[2]

Thirty-one years afterwards, in September, 1616, we have a description of the place from the pen of Sir Dudley Carleton, James I.'s ambassador at the Hague. Sir Dudley, afterwards a friend of Rubens, and a negotiator for many of his pictures, made a short autumn tour in the Spanish Netherlands, and in a letter to a friend thus writes of Antwerp, having stayed there "an afternoone and morning to see the towne":—"I must tell you," he says, "the state of this towne, in a word so as you take it literally, *magna civitas*

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[1] Chr. Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus," act i., sc. 1.

[2] "Its downfall was instantaneous. The merchants and industrious artisans all wandered away from a place which had been the seat of a world-wide traffic, civilization and commerce departed, and in their stead was the citadel of the Jesuits."—MOTLEY'S *Netherlands*, i. p. 262.

magna solitudo;" (the great city is a great desert) "for in ye whole time we spent there I could never sett my eyes in the whole length of a streete uppon 40 persons at once: I never mett coach nor saw man on horseback: none of owr companie (though both were workie dayes) saw one pennieworth of ware ether in shops or in streetes bought or solde. Two walking pedlers and one ballad-seller will carrie as much on theyr backs at once, as was in that royall exchange ether above or below. The English house is filled wth schoole-boyes under the Jesuits discipline and the Esterlings[1] stands emptie. In many places grasse growes in the streetes, yet (that wch is rare in such solitarines) the buildings are all kept in perfect reparation. Theyr condition is much worse (wch may seem strange) since the truce then it was before; and the whole countrey of Brabant was suitable to this towne; *splendida paupertas*, faire and miserable."[2] Such was the state in which Antwerp had been left by the siege, by the destruction of all civil and religious liberty, and by the blockade of the river; so long was it before it showed any signs of recovering from the blow it had received. But during the life of Rubens, it did recover itself, as may be seen by the interesting account of John Evelyn, dated 5th October, 1641, when the painter was "lately deceased."

One of the terms of the capitulation of Antwerp was, that the possessions of Royalist absentees should be restored to them. Here was hope for the Rubens family. She who, as the true-hearted wife, had by her importunity freed her

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[1] "The *Oesters' house*, belonging to the East India Company, is a most beautiful palace, adorned with more than 300 windows."—J. Evelyn's "Diary," 5th Oct., 1641.

[2] Sainsbury's "Papers relating to Rubens," p. 11.

husband from captivity, exercised her ingenuity in regaining their inheritance for her children; and we know that Maria Rubens was successful, after a time, in recovering a considerable portion of her husband's patrimony.

Her son, Peter Paul, in the meantime was receiving his education at the hands of the Jesuits, who were the only teachers Philip II. would tolerate after the recapture of the city: in fact, some of the Jesuits went so far as to persuade him that the only way to recover the fallen prosperity of the city, was by an increase in the number of their order, and that of the barefooted friars. At the Jesuits' College he went through a course of "the humanities"—as it used to be, and in Scotland still is, rightly called—and probably he had at the same time to acquire, what should have been his native tongue, Flemish. The boy showed an aptitude for languages. Descamps says, on the authority of Felibien,[1] that he spoke seven; we learn that in after years he wrote Flemish, Italian, Latin, with equal facility, and nearly as well, French. He does not seem to have been familiar with English, at all events before he came to this country, for Lord Carlisle, writing in May, 1628, when he quotes Rubens's words, gives them in French, though the rest of his letter is in English. This accomplishment of languages was common in his country at this time. The Count Egmont, who was executed in 1568, and who was looked upon as rather an ignorant man, spoke three. William of Orange made no pretence at learning, but was able to master five, whilst Cardinal Grenvella at the age of twenty spoke and wrote seven, with equal facility and elegance.

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[1] Felibien, tom. ii. p. 196.

It seems pretty evident that her twenty years' exile had had considerable influence upon Maria Rubens. Whatever her religious convictions may have been, her husband was at all events on the list of those suspected of being a Calvinist, if not an Anabaptist. As such he had been denounced before he left Antwerp. At Siegen he evidently conformed (though he was not allowed to attend the services for five years) to the church of the Count John of Nassau, which was certainly Lutheran. He must, however, have made his peace with the Roman Catholic church whilst he was at Cologne, otherwise he would not have been buried in St. Peter's church, though certainly he had been what M. Mortier calls a "*Catholique non practiquant.*" Maria Rubens, moreover, must have made good her title to orthodoxy, before she could have recovered her husband's property. She was determined that her son should not in his turn risk his position by ill-timed scruples; so she availed herself of the teaching afforded by the reigning powers, and must have backed up the advice of the Reverend Fathers with much homely counsel to the same effect: we find Peter Paul Rubens ever a steadfast upholder of the Roman Catholic faith, a painter of legends, a trusted diplomatist of His most Catholic Majesty, and a correspondent of devout abbots, besprinkling his letters with such devout and faithful sayings, that it has been thought worth while to collect them into a volume.[1]

The original intention seems to have been that the young Rubens should follow his father's profession of the law, but to this he himself showed great repugnance. In the

[1] "Les Leçons de Pierre Paul Rubens, ou fragments epistolaires, &c., par J. F. Boursard, Brussels, 1838."

meantime, in order to complete his education as a gentleman, and in accordance with the custom of the time, he was placed as a page in the household of a lady of rank, the widow of a Count Lalaing, a Royalist and Catholic, whom even William the Silent respected as "sprung from an honourable house, and possessing the virtue and courage of his ancestors; a friend of his country and a fervent hater of foreign oppression." The old Flemish nobility, especially those who belonged to the Royalist party, had no doubt acquired a considerable share of the dignity of the Spaniards during their rule, and here we may believe that Rubens first learnt some of that stateliness of manner which induced Sir Dudley Carleton to call him "the Prince of Painters and of Gentlemen." The life of a page did not suit Rubens, accustomed to a home where learning and taste were combined with wide sympathies and travelled leisure; he needed a more active life than attending on a stately lady, with intermediate times of profitless leisure.

He must soon have left this lady's service, for we find that at the age of thirteen the boy induced his mother to place him with a painter, from whom he might learn his art. The first instructor chosen for the young student was Tobias Verhaeght, as he wrote his own name, or as he is sometimes called Verhaecht, or Van der Haeght. He was a native of Antwerp, born in the year 1566, and received as master-painter (*franc-maitre*) into the guild of St. Luke in 1590. It must have been shortly after this and before he became dean of the guild in 1594-95, that he took Rubens as a pupil, taught him the elements of drawing, and inculcated into him that love of nature and landscape which he never lost. It is curious to note that Rubens,

who began with scenes of country life, returned in his last days to his first love, so that when he could no longer cover his huge canvases with heroic figures, he would retire to his château at Steen and paint landscapes, even though the gout almost incapacitated him from holding his brushes. Verhaeght's pictures are now rare, but he was highly thought of in his own time; he was patronized by the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and even in Rome his extraordinary work, the 'Tower of Babel,' had its admirers. He was so satisfied with this success that he painted the subject three or four times. He was, however, weak in figure drawing, and what his landscapes required in that way were frequently supplied by Sebastian Franck—an arrangement more common in former times than it is now. Rubens soon found, or thought he found, that his own strength lay rather in historical subjects, and managed to get himself removed to the studio of Adam van Noort.

This Adam van Noort[1] (as he himself wrote his name, though he is often called Van Oort), born at Antwerp in 1558, was the son of Lambert van Noort, a native of Amersfort, who in the year 1547, when Antwerp was in its most flourishing condition, its merchants rich, and the arts patronized, took up his abode in the city on the Scheldt. When evil days came upon Antwerp, Lambert van Noort died in poverty.

His son Adam, at the age of fourteen, was thus thrown upon the world at a most unfortunate time. He seems to have worked hard, and in spite of every disadvantage to have made for himself one of the best, if not the

[1] See P. Génard, A. van Noort, in "De Vlaemsche School," vol. ii. p. 105.

best position in the school of Antwerp. He was received as a free-master into the guild of St. Luke in 1587, and served as dean in 1598. Rubens himself, after he had been to Italy, and was fully imbued with the Italian masters, said that Van Noort would have surpassed his contemporaries had he visited Rome and endeavoured to form his style upon the best models. The gossiping chroniclers of artists' defects have for some reason or other taken an especial dislike to Van Noort. They represent him as violent tempered, morose, and brutal; they say that he quarrelled with Rubens, and that Jordaens alone, of all his pupils, remained with him, and that this was owing to Jordaens' love for his daughter, whom he afterwards married.

The truth, thanks to Mons. P. Génard, has at length come to light. Rubens remained with Van Noort four years; longer than he stayed with any other artist. In the course of forty years, from 1587 to 1627, there are thirty-two pupils registered to this "brutal" man in the Liggere of the Guild of St. Luke, amongst whom do not appear Van Balen, Vrancx, or Rubens, who are known from other sources to have studied with him.

In the church of St. James at Antwerp, which possesses an extensive collection of very valuable works, there is a picture by Adam van Noort—'St. Peter taking the Piece of Money from the Fish'—which shows the master's free and dexterous boldness of drawing, his brilliancy of colouring, and his knowledge of light and shade. In this picture may be seen the work of a man whose rich and pure mind can comprehend the greatest subject; whose powerful hand can follow without difficulty the minutest suggestion of his intellect. His figures are produced on the canvas with extraordinary

facility, with a freedom and dexterity of drawing not to be found in the Flemish school before his time, whilst his brilliant colour and study of light and shade seem to presage the works of Rubens and Jordaens. From this example we can calculate the influence which this master has exercised on Flemish art. Van Noort found it in a deplorable condition of degradation. The Renaissance and the Reformation between them had produced deep and irreparable damage. The links which had connected art with the past had been broken, and it was impossible to replace them; but Van Noort grasped the characteristics of his age, and endeavoured, as far as it was in his power, to unite the knowledge of the old school with the requirements of the time. He took from the old school what there was to take—colour, composition, and aerial perspective; but treated his subjects as modern taste required. Frans Floris, Coxie, and others, misled by the study of Grecian antiquity, had already imported mythological subjects into their country. Van Noort raised the style of painting to the character of an epic, and gave inspiration to the compositions of Rubens and Jordaens. "Under this master he laid the first foundations of his art for four years," says the artist's nephew, Philip Rubens.

When, from that restlessness which remained his characteristic all his life, he left Van Noort, the future head of the Flemish school went, during 1596, when in his nineteenth year, into the studio of Othon van Veen (often called Otto Vænius). This artist was born at Leyden in 1558 (the same year as Van Noort), and was the son of Cornelis van Veen, doctor of laws, and burgomaster of Leyden, whose family was descended from the old Dukes of Brabant. Remaining faithful to Philip II., he was deprived

of his property, and had to retire to Liege, after his son had learnt the elements of drawing from Isaak Claesz, called Nicolai. In Liege, Otto continued his studies under Dominic Lampsonius, secretary to the Cardinal Archbishop, until, in his seventeenth year, he started for Rome. Here he studied under Federigo Zucchero, remaining five years in Italy, when he returned to Liege, and entered into the service of the Prince Bishop, Ernest of Bavaria. The 31st of August, 1593, found him in Antwerp, and in the following year he was admitted a free master of the guild of St. Luke; about the same time he married Anne Loots, by whom he had a numerous family. His noble connections, and the devoted loyalty of his father, seem to have stood him in good stead, for we find him appointed Court painter, first to Alexander Farnese, and afterwards to the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella. On the occasion of the visit of Albert and Isabella to Antwerp in 1599, he was charged with the arrangement of the decorations and triumphal arches, as he had been in 1594, when the Archduke Ernest entered. Engravings by P. van der Borcht, published by Plantin, have preserved his designs. Van Veen afterwards became Master of the Mint in Brussels, and died in 1629.

In the year 1599 Peter Paul Rubens was enrolled in the famous Liggere of the guild of St. Luke as a free-master, and the noble connections of his master, Van Veen, were of much service in introducing him to the Regents, Albert and Isabella. Van Veen had been to Rome, and thus it came about that soon afterwards he was admitted (in 1603) into another of the famous guilds of Antwerp, viz., that of St. Peter and St. Paul of the Romanists (or those who had visited Rome). Telling his pupil what

he had himself acquired by his sojourn amidst the priceless collections of the finest works of art in the world, Van Veen had excited great enthusiasm in the mind of Rubens, for whom also he prepared the way by an introduction to the Archduke and his wife.

But before we travel with Rubens southwards we must say a word about a picture which must have been painted about this period—we mean the portrait of Maria Pypelincx, the true-hearted wife of the faithless Jan, the mother of the artist, the upholder of the family after the death of the father, the educator of his children, and the restorer of the fallen greatness of the name of Rubens. Calmly and beautifully does the pale face still look forth from the canvas as of old. She must have smiled with satisfaction on the rising fame of her youngest surviving son, now going forth into the world to have those talents acknowledged which her maternal heart was assured were in his keeping. Carefully attired, like a matron of good family, in velvet dress, mourning coif, and muslin cuffs, denoting her widowed state, she carries in her face the traits of a shrewd woman of the world, who has battled bravely with the times, and now sees victory crowning her endeavours. Her very chair, somewhat similar to the one still preserved in the Academy at Antwerp as the gift of her son, speaks of a home of comfort; her book, held in her still handsome hand, a forefinger marking the page she has not finished reading, tells of a certain amount of learned leisure; and her whole surroundings recall a home whence an artist, a man of culture, and a courteous gentleman might derive those early impressions and first inspirations which would develop, when he came in contact with a larger world, into masterpieces of art.

CHAPTER III.

ITALY AND SPAIN.

1600 TO 1603.

AT the end of the sixteenth century, travelling from one country to another was not a simple matter of asking for a passport, and providing the money necessary for travelling expenses. We know that our own Cecil used to examine young men who wished to visit the Continent as to their knowledge of their own land; and if the answers were not satisfactory, he would send back the would-be tourist to travel over England before he made the acquaintance of other countries. The usual difficulties that might be obstacles in the way of ordinary travellers did not impede Rubens, for he carried with him that best of all passports—a pleasant face—and Otto van Veen's introduction to the Archdukes (as Albert and the Infanta were called), led them to forward his laudable desire to improve himself in art by a journey to the cradle of all the arts.

Other Flemings had been to Italy before him. Not only had Van Veen himself journeyed to Rome and studied under Zucchero, but Calvaert, Mabuse, and Sustermann (Lamberto di Lombardo) had become thoroughly Italian-

ized. Indeed, from the time when Van Eyck taught the Italians the secret of oil-painting, there had been much art-intercourse, and much mutual assistance. But drawing, colour, and composition were to be learnt in Italy alone.

A natural attraction led Peter Paul to Venice. Titian had died less than a year before Rubens was born. Paolo Veronese had survived until the year he had returned from Cologne to Antwerp, and Tintoretto had lived on until 1594. Naturally these great colourists attracted the pupil of Van Noort and Van Veen. On May 8th, 1600, Rubens's passport was signed by the authorities at Antwerp, and, according to the Latin life attributed to his nephew, Philip Rubens, he set forth on May 9th. The route that he took is uncertain, and we are in the dark as to the date of his arrival in Venice; but we may conjecture that he was present when, on Thursday, the 15th of July, the whole city turned out in festal array, and with a fleet of gondolas, to meet Vincenzo I. de Gonzaga, the illustrious and magnificent Duke of Mantua—whom Rubens had probably seen when he was at Antwerp, on the 21st of August in the previous year, as he journeyed through the Netherlands. On the occasion of this visit to Venice, the Duke occupied the palace of his resident envoy, Ercole Udine, near the church of the Madonna dell' Orto, famous for its Tintorettos; but the crowd of gentlemen who accompanied the great art-patron were accommodated in a large and noble house in the neighbourhood. One of those stories of which there are so many—handed on from biographer to biographer, and for which it is impossible to find any authentic evidence—states that Rubens happened to lodge in Venice at a house where a gentleman belonging to the suite of the Duke of Mantua was staying, and that this

gentleman, perceiving great talent in the young Fleming, introduced him to his master, who immediately attached him to his household. If this story deserves any credit, we have here the occasion on which it must have happened.

Another version of the introduction of Rubens is that which makes the Archdukes write direct to the Duke of Mantua, who in consequence gave him an appointment about his person. This certainly seems less credible even than the former account, inasmuch as the Records at Mantua, which are very minute in their details, and have been well preserved, contain no correspondence with the Court of Brussels about Rubens before the year 1607, and then there is no allusion to previous communications. The ducal party all arrived at Mantua from Venice on Wednesday, July 22nd. Whether Rubens returned with them is a matter of much doubt; there are no documents to be found that point either way.

The Duke of Mantua was at this time about thirty-seven years old. He was the son of William—surnamed Il Gobbo, or the humpbacked—and Eleanor of Austria. He married first one of the Farnese family; but this marriage was dissolved two years afterwards, and the princess became a nun. He afterwards espoused Leonora de' Medici. Remarkable for his beauty, extravagant, liberal, voluptuous, he inherited neither his father's physical defects nor his economic and administrative excellences. He was moreover sumptuous, chivalrous, much given to gallantry, and at the same time of a highly cultivated mind. He had assisted Tasso in his troubles, procured his liberation, and carried him off to Mantua. The Duke maintained a company of comedians that was renowned throughout Europe: he lost enormous sums of money at

THE RETURN FROM EGYPT.

At Blenheim.

play, his intrigues were innumerable, and he contrived to give his reign a character for expense and magnificence which made it more brilliant than beneficial to his subjects. He was somewhat of a poet, and wrote a few elegant sonnets; he was fond of the conversation of literary characters, corresponded with most of the learned men of the day, and collected about him painters, poets, composers, instrumental performers, inventors, alchemists, and astrologers. He had numerous children: his eldest son married a princess of the house of Saxony; his second became a cardinal; and one of his daughters married into the house of Lorraine. He ruled with dexterity; and, owing to his alliances and family connections with the ruling powers in the greater countries of Europe, he obtained countenance from them in his intercourse with his smaller neighbours.

The principal personage in Mantua next to the Duke was his confidential adviser and secretary Annibale Chieppio, who afterwards became his Minister of State. He originally studied civil law, became an able diplomatist, was an indefatigable worker, thoroughly loyal to his prince, and had abundant talent to serve him as he required. His despatches show his ability. He accompanied the Duke on many of his journeyings, and especially went with him to the wars in Hungary. No calumny nor envy was ever able to remove him from the Duke's favour. This man became the protector of Rubens; with him the painter kept up a correspondence whenever he was away from Mantua, and to him he looked for and from him he obtained, assistance in all the designs that he undertook.

The Duke did not stay at Mantua for any length of time, but with his Duchess Leonora, daughter of Francesco I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, visited the State of Monteferrato

in September, and then went on to Florence, in order that the Duchess might visit her sister Maria de' Medici, a personage who will appear again more than once in connection with Rubens, and who was to be married on the 5th October, 1600, to Henry IV., the great Henry of France. The Duchess afterwards accompanied her newly-married sister to Marseilles to meet her husband, whilst the Duke visited Casale, Milan, and Tuscany, where his wife joined him; and, together, they returned to Mantua, a few days before Christmas, 1600.

Where was Rubens all this time? There is no mention of him in the minute despatches that the Duke received from various ministers. This is but negative evidence, but it allows us to suppose that he had not yet finished his first study of the works of the great Venetian painters, from whom, original artist as he was, he could not but have learnt much. It seems probable, but we have no evidence to confirm it, that Rubens went to Mantua in the winter of 1600-1601. The first authentic record that we have of him is one in July, 1601, and that refers to his departure for Rome.

At the end of July in this year the Duke of Mantua was summoned by the Emperor Rudolph to assist him in his campaign against the Turks. Before he departed, he took measures that the embellishment of his capital, for which he had already done much, should be continued, and amongst those who received commissions for this purpose was Pietro-Paolo Rubens, a name by which he now first appears, but which he afterwards usually adopted.

On the 18th July the Duke gave him a letter of introduction and recommendation to Cardinal Alessandro Montalto, at Rome, requesting him to assist the Flemish painter

"to make copies and to execute some works of painting," which the Duke had ordered for himself. On the 15th of the following August, Cardinal Montalto answers that he has told Rubens that he will assist him, and that he has urged him to apply to him in any difficulties. This Cardinal Montalto was a personage of great importance —he was the nephew of Sixtus V., who had appointed him cardinal at an early age; he was very rich, had great taste in all matters of art, and was profuse in his expenditure. He was said to have had at one time about £10,000 a year, an enormous sum considering the difference in the value of money. He was a great friend of the Duke of Mantua, and he seems to have done much to encourage and help Rubens.

It is to this period of the painter's life probably that we should attribute the notes and drawings which he entitles 'De figuris humanis, &c." The original manuscript of this work was, in 1845, in the possession of Messrs. Woodburn, of St. Martin's Lane, and a copy, very carefully reproducing the varieties of inks, languages, and writings, was brought about the middle of the last century by Captain Johnson from Brussels and Antwerp, to his father, the well known antiquary, Mr. Maurice Johnson, of Spalding, by whom it was exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries in London, as related in Walpole's "Anecdotes of Painting." The illustrations of the text are mostly taken from the Farnese Hercules; but besides there are a number of sketches of Michelangelo's 'David,' at Florence, heads of Galba and Julius Cæsar, the former's neck compared with a cow's dewlap, Hercules's head side by side with a lion's, and his neck with a bull's, in addition to numerous small figures rapidly dashed off from early

works of art in the celebrated collection then in that city. Among these, we know that there were several by Andrea Mantegna, nine of which represented the "Triumph of Julius Cæsar," and were said by Vasari to be the best work of the painter's. This collection afterwards became the property of our own King Charles I., and thus these Mantegnas have found a home at Hampton Court. Rubens's copy of one of them is now in the National Gallery (No. 278), and this throws some light on his mode of study. Dr. Waagen says of it: "His love of the fantastic and pompous led him to choose that with the elephant carrying the candelabra; but his ardent imagination, ever directed to the dramatic, could not be content with this; instead of a harmless sheep, which in Mantegna is walking by the side of the foremost elephant, Rubens has introduced a lion and lioness, which growl angrily at the elephant. The latter on his part is not idle, but looking furiously round, is on the point of striking the lion a blow with his trunk. The severe pattern he had before him in Mantegna has moderated Rubens in his taste for very full forms, so that they are here more noble and slender than is usual with him. The colouring, as in his earliest pictures, is more subdued than in the later, and yet more powerful. Rubens himself seems to have set a high value upon this study, for it was among his effects at his death." In the "Inventory of Pictures found in the house of the late S^r^. Peter Paul Rubens Kn^t^., after his death," the first of "various articles of curiosity" is mentioned as "Three cloathes pasted uppon bord, being the triumph of Julius Cæsar, after Andrew Mantegna; not full made." These "three cloathes" passed to the Balbi Palace, at Genoa. During the European war at the

beginning of this century, they were brought to England, where they were for some time in Mr. Rogers's collection, and were finally bought for the National Gallery for 1050 guineas. Thus we see that Rubens's copies were not exact. They had somewhat of his own impress upon them, just as in Mr. Maurice Johnson's manuscript and in the book of drawings of costume in the British Museum, the figures have a stoutness that is wanting in the original sculpture or pictures from which they are taken; and as his sketches of Egyptian sphinxes and mummies have a Flemish air about them. Whether he copied many others or only made pictures of his own we know not. We do know that there were at Mantua works by both the Bellinis (Gentile and Giovanni), Correggio, Francia, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Palma Vecchio, Pordenone, Raphael, Giulio Romano, Andrea del Sarto, Tintoretto, Titian and Paolo Veronese.

Early in June, 1602, the Duke of Mantua set out on one of his frequent progresses. He was at Milan on the 13th, and then went on to Casale, the capital of his little principality of Monteferrato, whence he was to have journeyed again to Spa, but for some reason or another, the expedition was postponed, and the Duke returned to Mantua. It is one of those questions which suggests itself, but to which as yet no answer has been found, whether Rubens accompanied his *Serenissimo Padrone* on this occasion. The ordinary biographies of Rubens declare that he visited Milan whilst he was in Italy, that he copied Leonardo's 'Last Supper,' and painted pictures of his own whilst there; and are not those pictures in the Brera and the Ambrosian Library to this very day, to attest the truth of these statements? But so many of these well-attested facts turn out to be impossible, that we must be careful in

accepting this and many other legends about his Italian and other journeys, unless we have documentary evidence as to their truth; and in this case *the evidence* is wanting.

In the meantime other work of a new character was awaiting Rubens. We have seen that he has been all his life brought up among cultivated people; of late years he has spent his time amid the courtiers of Mantua, and the learned and artistic society that has ever formed a select coterie in Rome; his portraits tell us that he was a handsome and agreeable man, and we gather from his own letters and from numerous hints in the correspondence of the time, that he possessed a certain magnificence of manner. He was also of ready judgment and confident in his own resources. All this must have been evident to the Duke, and we may suppose also to '*Madama Serenissima*,' and in consequence he was chosen for a mission all the more difficult that it was unavowed. He was to be sent on an *artistic commission* to Spain. It was not an embassy, for Iberti was the Duke's Resident at the Court of Madrid; but being a painter Rubens was sent in charge of some paintings, and being a good horseman, and fond of the animal he so well portrayed, he was to convey some horses; and in his character of gentleman and artist he was to paint portraits and make himself agreeable to the King, and to one greater than the King, the King's favourite, the Duke of Lerma. In August, 1602, Lelio Arrigoni, the Resident in Rome, was ordered to procure copies of a dozen of the most celebrated pictures. For this purpose he employed Pietro Facchetti, a painter of some note, now utterly forgotten. Arrigoni is constantly reminded to hurry on the work, and in November it is suggested to him that he should send on the portion that is finished. He answers

that the painter is doing his best, but that he had been advised by no less a person than Girolamo Silva, keeper of the jewels to the Archduchess Isabella, not to let them go until they were finished in a manner worthy of his reputation, but that they should be sent by Christmas. By the 21st December, the cases were sent off with sixteen pictures, one of which, the 'Creation of the World, and the Seven Planets,' executed by Salviati and Baldassare of Siena, from the sketches of Raphael, had never been copied before. A beautiful carriage, and several horses, for the breed of which Mantua had for some generations been celebrated, and which the present Duke had done much to keep up, were also to be sent with their Polish grooms.

On the 5th of March, 1603, Rubens received his passports and was despatched with the presents which he was to deliver to the Mantuan ambassador, Signor Annibale Iberti. They were as follows:—

To the King, the carriage and horses; *eleven* arquebusses, of which are *six à baleine et six rayées* (whatever that may mean); a vase of rock crystal filled with perfumes.

To the Duke of Lerma, all the paintings; a tall silver vase with scent; two gold vases.

To the Countess of Lemus, a cross, and two candlesticks of rock crystal.

To the Secretary, Pedro Franqueza, two vases of rock crystal, hangings of damask, and a frontal of cloth of gold.

"With the present comes Peter Paul, a Fleming, our painter," says the Duke in his letter to Iberti, "to whose care we have resolved to commit these objects . . . . the arquebusses have been made perfectly according to the custom of this country of fine steel, and with a clever device of which the said Peter Paul will explain the secret. The paintings

are for the Duke of Lerma, and since, as regards their quality and their construction, Peter Paul will say all that is proper, like the well-informed man he is, we will not go further into details. These presents are to be offered by you personally with the assistance, of course, of Peter Paul, whom we have the pleasure of knowing will be introduced by you as a person expressly sent with them. And as the same Peter Paul is very successful in painting portraits, we desire, if there are any other ladies of quality besides those whose portraits Count Vicenzo obtained for us, you will take advantage of his presence. If Peter Paul has any want of money for his return you will furnish him with it, advising us of the amount, and we will," &c.

On the 6th or 7th of March, Peter Paul set forth with his cavalcade. His best road would have been by Genoa, but he was advised to go to Leghorn, and thus had to cross the Apennines. As the letters of Rubens describing this journey and his doings in Spain—found in the archives of Mantua by M. Armand Baschet—have never, we believe, been published in England, we will here give a translation of them. He writes to Chieppio from Florence:—

"*Illustrious Sir and Honoured Patron,*

"To obey before all things his most Serene Highness, who has given me orders to report the success of my journey step by step, thus compelled by the force of circumstances, I decide to torment you above others, confident that I am in your good will and courtesy. In the bosom of the vast ocean of all the most important business, you will not disdain to occupy yourself with my little bark, very badly directed up to the present time by the advice of some ignoramus. I accuse no one, and I do not excuse myself; but I say it in order that his Serene Highness may know that

THE TRIUMPH OF SILENUS.

From the painting by Rubens in the National Gallery.

if the damage falls upon him, it is by some one else's fault. The fact is that I arrived at Florence the 15th of March (not without great expense in getting my luggage across the Alps, especially the little carriage), as I will tell afterwards. I sent the letters to Signor Cosmo Gianfigliazzi and Signor Capponi, and other letters of certain others to Signor Pierio Bonsi, principal merchants of this town. They no sooner understood the matter than they were extremely astonished, and almost went so far as to cross themselves, to so great an extent did such a mistake cause them to wonder, for they assured us that it was at Genoa that we ought to embark, and not to risk ourselves so rashly in coming to Leghorn, without having had information beforehand of some passenger vessel; and all affirmed that I should wait in vain for three or four months, not without running the risk of having to go after all to Genoa. The day following there came from Genoa (such was our lot) merchants of this country, who told me that there were three galleys ready to start, and that a vessel loading for Alicante would float eight or ten days more in the harbour, so that by the advice of these Florentines and Genoese, I have decided to go as soon as possible to Leghorn, and to embark there immediately for Genoa, where, God willing, I shall arrive in time, as I hope, thanks to the good genius that watches over our prince. I shall certainly not be wanting in diligence, and I should undoubtedly have started had it not been for the coach, which has not yet arrived, thanks to the oxen that drag it in place of mules, and also for our machine with shafts, made expressly at Mantua, and brought so far only to be left here, not without the derision of the muleteers, who said that even when empty it was heavy enough for all the beasts of burden."

"There follows," says M. Baschet, "an account of various troubles on the road, claims of custom-house officers first at Ferrara, and then at Bologna. Then come remarks upon the expense, which was far in excess of the parsimonious provisions of the ducal treasurer."

"I will do what I can," continues Rubens; "it is the Duke's business, not mine. If he has not confidence in me, he has given me too much money; but if he has, far too little. For if I come to an end of it (which heaven grant we may not experience!), what a blow it will be to his reputation. Then what danger would he have incurred if he had given me too much, submitting my accounts always to a scrutiny as severe as he likes? What loss would it have been, except of interest and time? But I am occasioning this loss to you, by this long and tiresome letter, not perceiving my mistake in speaking in so violent a manner when treating with persons so elevated. Will your goodness pardon me, and out of your reserve fund make up my deficiencies? I beg you, therefore, to be good enough to speak to his Highness only of what will please him, and of what is necessary for my interest. And if my complaints and lamentations do not require such energy and emphasis, I submit myself entirely to your most prudent judgment. I beg you to speak and act in your own way, and to dispose of your servant; and so, kissing your hands, I submit myself to you.

"Your lordship's very humble servant,

"PIETRO PAULO RUBENS.

"*From Florence, this day,* 18*th March, the year* 1603.

"*To the most illustrious Annabale Chieppio, signor secretary of His Highness.*"

He writes again, on the 26th March, from Pisa, that he

had been more fortunate, although he had been delayed six days on account of the carriage, the rain having set in as soon as he left Florence. Arrived at Pisa, he got the same night to Leghorn, and found two or three ships which had come from Hamburg at the desire of the Grand Duke, laden with corn, and ready to set sail with their freight to Spain. He had already come to terms with one of the captains, when the latter received orders from the Grand Duke, which caused him to change his destination. Rubens then seeks another vessel; the captain is not sure of the time of his sailing, still having business with the merchants.

On the eve of his departure, still troubled about money matters, Rubens writes:—

"*Most Illustrious and Respected Signor*,

"Up to the present, it seems to me I have brought to a good conclusion the business of the journey. May God do the rest! Horses, men, and things have been embarked, and nothing is wanting to us now but a favourable wind, which we look for from hour to hour. Our provisions have been laid in for a month and our passage is paid. In fact, everything is perfectly arranged, thanks to the good offices of Signor Dario Thamagno, the first merchant in Leghorn, but in reality a Florentine, who, besides the friendship he has for Signor Cosmo, is most well affected to the Duke. It would not displease me if his Highness in passing or repassing here, would afford him a kind look or a friendly word, in such a way (since he aspires to honours and lives upon the incense of Courts) that he may infer that he owes the good graces of the sovereign to his benefits to me. As to the sums which his Highness has sent me, not without great trouble to the auditor of the journey, they will not be sufficient for the expenses

from Alicante to Madrid, not to mention the duties and customs, or accidental circumstances that may arise. Signor Cosmo tells me that the journey is of slight importance, three or four days at most, and I hear that it exceeds 280 miles. For the benefit of the little horses we shall go by short journeys. Of his Highness's money, there remain but little more than 100 *ducatoni.* It does not signify if they are not enough, for I have kept what the Duke gave me on my own account. If it should happen that any one has suspicions about my negligence or my facility for spending, I shall easily show the contrary by means of the account. I should not venture upon such a remark, annoying to me, and more so to the ears of your lordship, if it were not that the memory of many things which I have heard, even from the mouth of his Highness, excites and irritates me. Moreover, all the busybodies, as if they were appointed appraisers, are hastening to mix themselves up in the negotiations."

"All ended," says M. Baschet, "in admiration of the liberality of the Duke! The sum was much larger than was required for such a short journey! Ample provision had been made against every kind of accident and every possible misfortune!"

Rubens then gives an account of what he thought he ought to do. Could he, he asks, without derogating from the honour of his Highness, try to avoid the payment of customs? He declares that not the slightest disgrace has marked this journey. If he has had exemption from duties, it was owing to the spontaneous liberality of the authorities. The expenses of the men have been moderate, those for the horses sumptuous but necessary, such as baths of wine and other precautions. The contracts

made on the journey—as they will see by the original accounts of the Martinelli at Ferrara, the Rossi at Bologna, the Riccardi at Pisa, and of Signor Dario Thagmano at Leghorn—have been very advantageous. In fact, where he has had to act in the interest of his sovereign, he has acted *alla mercadantesca.* The Grand Duke has increased the number of his horses by a hackney for Don Juan de Wich, his Majesty's commander at Alicante, and his baggage by a magnificent marble table.

At the time of Rubens's arrival in Spain, Annibale Iberti had been for many years the Duke of Mantua's Envoy. He resided at Valladolid in order to be near the all-powerful Don Francisco de Ronas y Sandoral, Cardinal Duke of Lerma, the King's favourite and chief Minister, whose estate of Ventosiglia was a few miles from that town. The King and the Duke were both lovers of art, and had collections of the best pictures to be obtained at that time in the Peninsula. Rubens's next letter to Chieppio describes his arrival in Spain.

"After twenty days along a terrible road, owing to continual rain and violent winds, we arrived on the 13th May, at Valladolid, when Signor Annibale did not fail to receive us most courteously, although he told me he had received no order to that effect from his sovereign master. To this, which somewhat astonished me, I replied that certainly such was the intention of his Highness, and that after so many precedents, it would be superfluous to state that I was not the first who had been so sent to him by the Duke. Perhaps he had his reasons. He had always shown himself an excellent and charming gentleman, but he has begged me to write to your lordship."

M. Baschet tells us that, as usual, he had something to say about money matters. His expenses had been great; he had paid 300 scudi to this person, 200 ducatoni to that; he had arrived with an empty exchequer, and yet he was obliged to spend something, especially for clothes. He would have them modest, but they must always be becoming the sovereign he served. He would apply to Iberti, who helps him in everything, and put himself entirely under his instructions. Thanks to him he had been able to borrow 300 ducats. He had disbursed 200 ducats of his own during the journey; there are thus only a hundred for which he is debtor, and he is willing to carry this to the account of his future salary.

The same day (17th May) Rubens writes to the Duke. He informs his Highness of the arrival of the horses, *pieni e belli come si serai della stalla di vostra Altezza Serenissima.* All the men are in good health, with the exception of one, his man-servant. The crystal vases are with him, the rest are on the road. He boldly and freely anticipates some attacks on him that might be addressed to the Duke, and deprecates any reproach until he shall be able to defend himself in person.

On the 24th May, both Rubens and the Iberti write, detailing the condition of the pictures when they were unpacked. Rubens says:—

"Unjust fate, jealous of my too great satisfaction, has not ceased, as is its custom, from leavening my joy with some misfortune. Does it not this time find a means of destroying where every human precaution could not only not prevent, but not even suspect danger? Thus the pictures packed under my direction and supervision with every possible care, in the presence of the Duke himself, after

being opened at Alicante for the custom-house officers, and found in perfect condition, and finally unpacked to-day at Signor Iberti's house, have made their appearance literally spoilt, and that to such a degree, that I despair of being able to restore them. The canvases themselves, though protected with metal guards and waxed cloth doubled, enclosed in wooden boxes, are rotted in consequence of the continuous rain for twenty-five days, a thing incredible in Spain; the colours have scaled off, bulged up and swelled, in many places are hopelessly gone, unless they can be detached with a knife and re-varnished. Such in truth is the misfortune. I do not make it a bit worse than it is in order to enhance the restoration, for which I will not fail to employ every possible means, it having so pleased his Highness to make me the superintendent and conductor of other men's work without allowing me to do a stroke of my own. I speak thus, not from resentment, but at the suggestion of Signor Iberti, who wishes me at once to make a number of pictures with the assistance of the Spanish painters. I feel more disposed to second his desire than to approve of it, considering the short time we have before us, added to the incredible inability and negligence of these painters, and what is of more consequence, their manner (God preserve me from resembling them in anything!) which is absolutely different from mine. In fact, *pergimus pugnantia secum cornibus adversis componere.* Then the matter will not be kept secret, through these painters letting it out; for, despising my assistance and advice, they will usurp other people's work and declare the whole to be their own. I believe this the more, because, suspecting that the work is for the Duke of Lerma, they will not doubt that the painting is for a public gallery. The thing is of

little consequence to me in this respect, and I would willingly make them a present of the credit, but I conclude necessarily that all this business being done here, will be recognized even by the freshness of the colours, and the trick prove of little advantage. I have always made it a point not to be mixed up with any man, however great he might be; in that case, if the work of the one is as good as that of the other, I should find most unfortunately for my part, that my character had been destroyed (*sverginato*) for the sake of a work of little value and unworthy of my name, which is not unknown here. If the commission indeed had been given me, I should have wished—with more honour both to him, and to me—to have given a very different sort of satisfaction to the Duke of Lerma, who is not ignorant of good things, for the reasons, first, that he delights in them; and, secondly, that he sees every day so many admirable pictures by Titian, Raphael, and others, in the King's house, and at the Escurial. I am surprised both at their quantity and quality; but of the moderns there is nothing of any consequence. I protest simply that I have no other end in view in this Court, than the service of his Highness, to which I devoted myself the first day that I saw him. Let him order me and dispose of me in that as in everything else, and be assured that I shall conform to his instructions in every respect. Signor Iberti has a like power over me (though in less degree), for I am certain that, if he does not give up to my way of seeing things, he is in perfect agreement with me. He shall be obeyed; I write thus not to blame him, but to show how I have had a difficulty in consenting to make myself known by works which are not worthy of me and of my serene patron, who, I am sure, owing to the good offices of

your lordship, will interpret my suggestions in the best manner.

"Your lordship's
"Very humble servant,
"PETER PAUL RUBENS.

"*From Valladolid*, 24 *May*, 1603.

"*To the very illustrious Lord, and much respected patron, Signor Annibale Chieppio, Secretary to His Serene Highness, Mantua.*"

This is certainly one of the most striking letters in the whole of the correspondence. The style is diffuse, and full of parentheses; the writer has a difficulty in expressing himself, but in the midst of it all, how does the pride, the self-consciousness, the young-mannishness of the painter come out. He is no mere Court painter, who jumps at an opportunity of bringing himself forward, but he knows his own value, and is anxious not to discount his fame at a ruinous rate of interest.

The answers of Chieppio are not forthcoming. Being sent to Rubens, they would naturally not be found in their integrity at Mantua, but there are not even abstracts, which there probably would have been if the correspondence had been with the Duke, and if the minister had not looked upon the letters as of a private character. In the meanwhile Iberti writes and gives his suggestions as to how the difficulty is to be got over. From him we learn that two pictures, a 'St. Jerome' of Quentin Massys, and the portrait of the Duke of Mantua, have been preserved. He advises that the Fleming (*il Fiammingo*) should touch up the damaged canvases, though he hears it will require at least a month for this, and that as regards some of the smaller pictures, nothing can be done for them. To supply

their place, in the interval before the King's return, which he hears will be at the end of the next month, he suggests that the said Fleming should paint some half dozen landscapes, *cose boscareccie*, things much prized in Spain, and very suitable for a gallery, though indeed there is scarcely time for them, especially as he has not been able to meet with a young painter to help him. He will write to the Duke of Lerma, to know whether he should send the carriage to Burgos, so that his Majesty can use it on his return to Valladolid, and will confess to him that an accident has happened to the pictures which the individual who brought them is repairing. Finally, the restoration of the pictures will so delay the painter in doing the portraits of the ladies ordered by his Highness, that he doubts whether Rubens will be able to return before the period when his own successor at the Court of his Catholic Majesty ought to arrive.

Under the date of the 7th June, he writes further news about the pictures. The Fleming is working at them; the misfortune is not so great as it was thought at first, the restoration is proceeding excellently. On the 5th June, the news is confirmed of the death of the Duchess of Lerma, at Buitrago, twenty leagues from Valladolid, from the effects of a malignant fever. This is a great event at the Court, and his audience will probably be put off.

Rubens continued his work, and finished it by the 17th of June. Two small paintings only were irreparable, a copy of Raphael's 'St. John,' and a 'Madonna.' To make up for them the painter had produced a 'Democritus' and a 'Heraclitus,' which, says Iberti, were esteemed excellent; the Duke of Lerma will lose nothing by the exchange. These pictures were for some time in the Torre de la Parada, but

in July, 1714, they were removed to the Palace del Pardo, and are now in the Gallery at Madrid.

On the Tuesday before the 6th July his Majesty returned from Burgos and Palenza to Valladolid, and the next day the Duke of Lerma went to visit the tomb of his wife. People still talked of his marrying again, and discussed the sincerity of his tears. The Resident had applied to him about an audience, and he had been referred to the King to arrange a place and time for a semi-private interview. Don Rodrigo Calderone had been appointed to give him instructions, but up to that date he had not appeared.

The day of presentation was the 17th of July, and Rubens thus describes it to the Duke:—

"*Most Serene Sire,*

"Although the diligence of Iberti renders my letter superfluous, I nevertheless cannot allow his full account to go to your Highness without a few words—not that I wish to supply anything, but to rejoice at the success of the mission, besides being able to add my testimony as having assisted or taken part in the delivery of the present. That of the carriage *I have seen*, that of the pictures and vases *I made*. (*Del caraccino vidi, delle pitture feci.*) As regards the first, I take pleasure in stating the judgments that the King expressed by actions, words, and smiles; as regards the second, I have had the pleasure of seeing and remarking the Duke of Lerma's judicious admiration applied to what was good, and his satisfaction at what was not rubbish; but as far as my discernment goes, it was occasioned by the number and excellence of the gifts. I hope, then (if acceptable gifts ever repay the donor), that your Highness has attained your object. The circum-

stances, in other respects, of time and place, and whatsoever else chance has rendered favourable, have lent us their assistance, and, above all, the excellent judgment of Iberti, who is very expert in using the proper terms agreeable to the fashion of this Court. It is to his sufficiency and great care that I hand over the remainder of this history. And the more readily that my humble qualities appear disproportioned, with regard to your Highness, for aiming at anything beyond serving you with devotion.

"From your most Serene Highness's

"Very humble servant,

"PETER PAUL RUBENS.

"*From Valladolid, the* 17*th July*, 1603.

"*To his most Serene Highness, the Duke of Mantua, &c. &c.*"

To the secretary the painter writes:—

"Seeing with my own eyes the presentation of the little carriage, but taking an active part in that of the pictures, I found both to my satisfaction, as being well directed and accomplished by the very judicious Iberti. It is true that he might at once have kept for himself all the honour of the commission, and yet given me the opportunity of making my bow, if it were only a silent one, to his Majesty, a good and convenient opportunity offering itself in an open and public place, accessible to all the world. I do not wish to put a bad interpretation upon it (it is of so little consequence), but I was astonished at the sudden change, especially after having communicated the Duke's letter to him, in which his Highness especially recommended my introduction to his Majesty (the particular favour of his Highness). I mention all this, not because I lament it like a formalist, or one ambitious of some fuss, or because I am annoyed at having been deprived of

it; but I simply recount what took place, nothing doubting but that Iberti changed his resolution at the moment for some valuable reason,—at least that in the fire of action he lost remembrance of what we had agreed upon just before. He has given me, indeed, no explanation, nor has he excused the reversal of the programme drawn out half-an-hour before. On my part, I have not given him an opportunity of doing it, nor have I let fall the least hint about this incident.

"I was admitted to the Duke's presence, and took part in the embassy. He exhibited his great satisfaction at the excellence and number of the pictures, which certainly have acquired a certain fair appearance of antiquity (by means of retouching), in spite even of the damage they had undergone. They are held and accepted as originals (at least, for the most part), without there being any doubt on his side, or assertion on ours, to make him believe them to be such. The King, the Queen, and several noblemen and painters have admired them. From henceforth, free from all embarrassment, I shall set to work at the portraits ordered by his Highness, and I shall not leave off the work, at any rate until I am interrupted by some fancy of the King or the Duke of Lerma, who has already proposed something to Iberti. I subject myself to his wishes, for I am sure he will not order me to do anything capable of being prejudicial to my patrons, in whose name I submit myself to his will.

"From your illustrious lordship's

"Very devoted servant,

"PETER PAUL RUBENS.

"*From Valladolid*, 1603, *this* 17*th day of July.*

"*To the very illustrious lord, my much respected patron, Signor Annibale Chieppio, secretary to H.S.H., Mantua.*"

The day after Rubens wrote, Iberti addressed a long letter of eight pages to the Duke, recounting all the details of the ceremonial of the presentation. His account does not differ in substance from that already given by Rubens, in the letters just quoted. Iberti does not forget to commend the skill with which the "Fleming" had retouched the pictures, and afterwards arranged them in the hall allotted for their reception. The conclusion of the letter serves to show the high estimation in which Rubens is already beginning to be held at this foreign Court:—

"His Excellency, the Duke of Lerma, has used the most courteous terms about the Fleming, who was present both at the presentation of the carriage, and the gift of the pictures. He has asked me if your Highness had sent him to remain in the service of his Majesty; I answered, that you would be very glad not to lose this servant, whom your Highness had sent only to accompany the pictures, and to give an account of the journey; your Highness not knowing otherwise, if it had met with the approbation of his Majesty and his Excellency, but that during the sojourn that he would make here, he would serve his Excellency in all he desired. I believe, in fact, that the Duke intends to order something of him.

"*From Valladolid*, 18*th July*, 1603."

Rubens went to work at his portraits. Iberti writes at the end of the month that "the Fleming has begun the portraits that his Highness had ordered, and is engaged on some order which the Duke of Lerma wished him to execute."

In the course of the autumn Rubens was summoned to Ventosiglia to paint a large portrait of the Duke of Lerma. In the meantime he probably witnessed the entry of the

ARCHBISHOP AMBROSE REFUSING TO ADMIT THEODOSIUS INTO MILAN CATHEDRAL.

From the painting by Rubens in the Belvidere, Vienna.

Princes of Savoy, and the grand proceedings on St. Bartholomew's day. In September a new Envoy from the Duke of Mantua, Celiero Bonati, came to take the place of Iberti, bringing with him letters for Rubens from the Secretary Chieppio. In the middle of October the painter was again summoned to Ventosiglia to finish the equestrian portrait. There is considerable doubt whether he went to the Escurial at this time. The King had retired thither, and the Envoy followed him, but whether Rubens accompanied the Envoy or not there is nothing to show.

There remains but one more letter relative to this sojourn in Spain, and that unfortunately is without further date than that of the year. It bore reference to a project the Duke of Mantua had conceived of a journey for Rubens into France, to paint the portraits of some of the reigning beauties. This project does not seem to have suited the painter's taste. He had referred to it once or twice before, rather questioning whether the Duke was serious in his intention, or had not at length given up the idea. Now he writes:—

"*My most illustrious and respected Lord,*

"I seem to understand, by your lordship's last letter, that his Serene Highness persists in his determination that I should go to France, a determination that he expressed to me before my departure. Allow me in regard to this to state my opinion of my fitness for this mission. If, however (as I believe) the Duke has no other project for this journey than the work of the portraits, I am astonished how little he has pressed for my return, in the various letters to Iberti, and even in the little letter of your lordship of the 1st October, this business not being important, and moreover, a thousand inevitable consequences

being the usual result of similar orders. I have, for my own part, the examples of the sojourns in Spain and at Rome; both have turned into as many months as there were weeks assigned to them. Signor Iberti knows the inevitable necessity which has compelled both him and me *ad jus usurpandum* without orders. Does your lordship really think that the French yield in the matter of curiosity to either the Romans or the Spaniards, especially as they have a king and queen who are not strangers to taste in the fine arts, as is shown by the great works interrupted for a time by *inopia operariorum?* About that I have special information, and how much they are endeavouring in Flanders, at Florence, and even in Piedmont and Savoy—in consequence of bad information, it is true—to meet with men of worth. These things—and I say it with the indulgence of your lordship—I should not avow, if I had not already chosen for my patron and master the Lord Duke, so far as the favour be granted me of having Mantua for my adopted country. The pretext, although a poor one, of the portraits to be done, is sufficient to enable me to have access to the most important works; only, seeing the kind of commission, I cannot imagine that the Duke will give their Majesties a full idea of what I am. I wish to suggest, then, that to my idea it would be more advantageous and sure, both as to time and price, to have them done by M. de la Brosse, or Signor Carlo Rossi, by some painter, that is, who is habituated and accustomed to this Court, and who has already by him a collection of this kind, without causing me to lose more time, journeys, expenses, salaries, in works to my notion low, vulgar, and open to all. In spite of everything, I put myself absolutely, as a good servant, at the disposal of my master,

and am ready to obey the slightest intimation he may give me. I beg him, however, to make use of me at his Court or elsewhere for enterprises more appropriate to my talent, and conformable to the necessity there is to continue the works already begun. This grace I shall be sure to obtain from the moment your lordship shall make yourself an intercessor for me to my lord the Duke, in faith of which I kiss hands always with most humble respect.

"From your very illustrious lordship's

"Very humble servant,

"PETER PAUL RUBENS.

"*From Valladolid, the year* 1603.

"*To the illustrious Lord, my much respected patron, the Signor Annibale Chieppio.*"

CHAPTER IV.

RETURN TO ITALY.

1604 TO 1608.

THE date of the return of Rubens from his commission in Spain is another of those facts about which there is a deficiency of evidence. His last letter to the Duke's secretary and councillor, and his own patron, is dated Valladolid, somewhere about the end of October or November, 1603. Whether he returned at once, or waited for Iberti, who left Spain between the 11th and 15th of March, 1604, is quite uncertain. Soon after his return in the following June the Ambassador is asked for the accounts of the painter's expenses.

In the meantime, on the 2nd of June, 1604, Rubens is gazetted as painter to the Duke, with a salary of 400 *ducatoni* a year, to be paid "from three months to three months, beginning from the 24th of May." Until February, 1606, he remained at Mantua, and during this period executed three large pictures as an altar-piece for the Church of the Holy Trinity, belonging to the Jesuits. The Duke, anxious to do all honour to the memory of his mother who was buried in this church, gave the painter a large sum for his work. The central picture is

described as the 'Mystery of the Trinity,' and contained portraits of various members of the royal family, including Duke Vincenzo and his Duchess, his father Duke Guglielmo, his mother, his son, and his daughter. This picture has suffered a cruel fate. When the French Republican armies besieged and took Mantua in 1797, this church, like many others, was used by the godless Revolutionists as a storehouse for fodder for their cavalry horses—a use of fine old architectural structures still observable in France at the present day. A French commissary, who thought to do a good stroke of business, tried to carry off this valuable picture, but its size caused a difficulty; he accordingly cut it into pieces for the convenience of carriage, and was about to forward it to his own country, when the authorities of the Academy of Mantua heard of the sacrilegious theft, and after some difficulty recovered the work of their great guest, but of course in pieces, some of which had unfortunately disappeared. The painter Pelizza was entrusted with the putting together of the portions that were recovered.

On the (spectator's) left of this picture was represented the 'Baptism of our Saviour'—a drawing for which is still preserved in the Louvre. The subject is divided nearly in half by the stem of a large tree, to the right of which is the Baptist, with Christ beyond him standing in the stream, whilst towards the side of the picture are angels gracefully floating in the air, and supporting some of the drapery. Leaning against the tree is a nearly nude spectator, who has either been baptized or is bathing, whilst to the left are several men bathing, dressing, or wiping themselves. The composition is pleasing, the figures natural and graceful, but when one seeks for some higher feeling,

the teaching of some new thought, there is a painful blank. This picture has suffered quite as much as its companion, from the stores that have been piled against it.

On the right of the central picture there was the 'Mystery of the Transfiguration,' but no account of this has come down to us.

During these same eighteen months, Rubens executed some copies of Correggios for the Emperor Rudolph II., who was not usually esteemed a very liberal patron of arts. The Court painter at Vienna at that period was Johann von Achen or Giovanni d'Ach, as he is called in the Italian records, by which latter surname he is sometimes known elsewhere. In 1603 he had been at Mantua and must have seen some of the copies which Rubens had had made for the Duke in Rome. Probably he suggested to the Emperor the desirability of having copies of two of the famous Correggios, which were at that time in the magnificent collection at Mantua, and also indicated the Fleming as a suitable person to make the copies. Von Achen was a native of Cologne, and would thus have an extra tie of sympathy with Rubens, who probably believed himself a native of the same city. At all events, Von Achen was commissioned to apply to Manerbio, the Duke of Mantua's Resident at Prague, to get permission from his master for these works to be executed. There were at Mantua about that time, according to a catalogue made some twenty years later, three pictures by Correggio; the first was 'Venus and Mercury teaching Cupid to read,' a picture which, with many others from the same collection, was bought by Daniel Nys for our King Charles I., and which after many vicissitudes has returned to England, and is now in the National Gallery (No. 10). The second

is an 'Ecce Homo,' and the third 'St. Jerome meditating over a skull.' As Rubens's copies have not been traced, we cannot tell which of the three he painted for the Emperor, but whichever they were, they were done during the absence of the Duke, who, in the course of the summer of 1605, visited the Vallombrosa, Umbria, Assisi, Perugia, and Rome. After his return, he writes on 30th September, 1605, that both the pictures are done and ready to be sent, as in fact they shortly were, for on the 24th of October they arrived at Prague. Towards the end of 1605, Rubens returned to Rome. The Duke's Resident writes to Chieppio on the 11th of February, 1606, to credit him with the payment of the painter's salary of twenty-five scudi a month. Later in the year, on the 29th July, Rubens himself writes to the councillor to beg for the continuance of the Duke's favour towards him, that he may continue his studies without looking elsewhere for the means of doing so. To this letter he signs his name "Pietro Pauolo Rubens," his usual signature when writing in Italian, as he seems by choice usually to have done. At other times his signature is simply P. P. Rubens, sometimes P. Rubens, and no instance is known of his writing his Christian names in full in any other languages than Italian and Latin; in the latter language it takes the form of Petrus Paulus Rubenius.

Towards the end of the same year, Rubens writes that he is greatly embarrassed by his sudden recall, and begs to be allowed to remain at Rome to finish some important works. He had spent all the summer in the study of his art, and had been obliged to undertake these works because he could not keep up his house and two servants on the 140 scudi he had received from Mantua whilst in Rome.

A great opportunity was now presented to him, and his ambition urged him to put himself forward as a candidate for the honour of painting the altar-piece of the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, which was then being decorated by some of the most celebrated painters in Rome. This was a chance of making his position among the first painters of the day which he would be very sorry to miss. Several persons of quality had interested themselves in his behalf. He felt sure, moreover, that Cardinal Borghese also would not fail to help him. Under these circumstances he hoped to be allowed to remain three months, or to return in the fine weather for that period. A fortnight afterwards the Duke directed Chieppio to let Rubens know that he gave him permission to prolong his sojourn in Rome, so that he might accomplish the work with which he had been commissioned, and that for this he might have three months; but that he must not fail to come to Mantua by Easter. Nevertheless, the painter was certainly in Rome in June, 1607, and he only left at last at the express request of the Duke, who desired his presence. Rubens did not return to the Duke without some reluctance on his own part, and some opposition from other quarters, the Cardinal Minister, Scipio Borghese, demanding that he should finish the altar-piece for the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, which he had begun.

In the latter part of the year 1607, the Duke of Mantua was much occupied in various ways. The Academy of Florence had elected him to be one of the *Elevati*, and in consequence he had turned his attention to music, composition, and lyric poetry, and took but little notice of Rubens, who was thus enabled to fulfil his wish and return to Rome. He finished the picture for the high altar of Santa Maria in

Vallicella; but when it came to be put up, it was found to be in such a "bad light that it was impossible to distinguish the figures, or to enjoy the exquisiteness of the colouring, or the delicacy of the heads and of the features, which had been carefully studied from nature." Under these circumstances the painter was not willing to let the picture remain, and he obtained leave from the fathers to whom the church belonged to replace it by a copy better suited to the position it was to occupy. Accordingly he writes on the 2nd of February, 1608, to his old friend Annibale Chieppio to suggest to him that "this misfortune of his might turn out advantageously to the Duke and Duchess, who had often expressed a wish to possess a picture of his for the gallery of paintings which they were collecting. Here was an opportunity! It was one of the largest and most successful pictures that he had painted; owing to the size, number, and variety of the figures of men, old and young, and of women richly dressed. There could be no great difficulty about price, because the fathers had agreed to give him 800 scudi (about £170), which at Rome was not considered too much; but he would leave himself in the hands of his Highness; besides, he did not want the money at present, except about 100 scudi (twenty guineas) for present expenses. He would like to know soon the determination of his Highness, because he was going to remove the picture and exhibit it in a better light before making the copy for the fathers. This would not take long to do," &c. (Rubens's Letters in the Mantuan Records.)

This proposal, though backed up by a strong recommendation from Giovanni Magno, was rejected. About a fortnight later (15th February) Chieppio writes a letter to Magno, explaining that the Duke is so greatly occupied

with the preparations for his son's wedding, about which he had now gone to Turin, that he had found but little opportunity for talking to him about it, and adds, "I have not found his Highness disposed to acquire Pietro Paolo's picture. In matters of expense we proceed at present very carefully." He wrote at the same time to Rubens himself, putting the refusal in as delicate a way as he was able.

Rubens, in his usual magnificent manner, takes the refusal very lightly. On the 23rd of February he writes to Chieppio, thanking him for his good offices. He is not sorry that the affair has fallen through: it has given him an opportunity of having his picture exhibited in Rome in another part of the church, and as the fathers do not object to his altering the treatment according to his fancy, he will probably find a home for it in Rome. He then turns to another matter, which we have passed over in order to finish this business about the picture first. On the same day that he wrote to Chieppio to offer the picture to the Duke, Magno wrote to the Duchess to say that he had been with Peter Paul Rubens to see the picture that Pomerancio (Cristofero Roncalli, born at Pomerancio) had painted for her. As far as he could judge, it was a great success; it was painted in as masterly a manner, and with as great study and care as the artist's most famous works. He does not rely upon his own judgment, not having a sufficient knowledge of painting, but Rubens agrees with him that 400 gold scudi is not an excessive price for such a picture by one who is reputed to be among the first artists in Rome. This is what Magno writes. Rubens in his later letter urges Chieppio to settle matters for him between the Duchess and Cristofero Pomerancio. The

painter had done his best to please her at a time when he was very busy; at first he had asked 500 gold scudi, but as she thought that exorbitant, he had consulted with several intelligent persons, and with Magno, and they had agreed that she could not pay less than 400, and he hoped she would send that sum soon, as otherwise matters would be very awkward for him, and he should not like to undertake any such commissions again. The matter was not settled quite so speedily as he desired, but it was taken out of his hands, and remained in those of Magno, by whom, at length, the money was paid in July, and the picture received by the Duchess in the following September.

The picture for the new church of the fathers of Santa Maria in Vallicella was finished and put up, and is still to be seen there, but we have been unable to trace the first painting which he did for them, nor can we say whether Rubens did find a home for it in Rome. The altar-piece represents a Madonna with the holy Child resting on her arm, and around are a number of cherubs and kneeling angels. Two side pictures support it, one of which represents the Pope, St. Gregory, with the martyrs SS. Maux and Papica, and on the other are portrayed St. Domitilla, with SS. Nereus and Achilles. (!)

It was mentioned above that the Duke of Mantua had gone to Turin for the marriage of his son. On the 18th of June, shortly after his return, he again set forth, this time to Flanders, and though before he had made it a great point that Rubens should accompany him, the painter now remained quietly in Rome. The Duke at all events journeyed on by Trent to Innspruck, Basle, and Nancy, at which latter place he stayed a short time with his daughter Margaret, who had, in 1606, married the Duke de Bar, a prince of

the house of Lorraine. Thence he journeyed on to Cologne, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Spa, where he stayed the greater part of the month of August, arriving at Brussels on the 29th. On the 17th of September he went to Antwerp, Rubens being still absent, and after an excursion into Holland, continued his tour to the Court of France, with which he remained some little time, both at Paris and at Fontainebleau. At length he left the latter place on the 22nd of October for Marseilles, going to Florence to be present at the marriage of one of the Medicis. Somewhere on the road, probably at Marseilles, he must have received a letter (the last, as far as we know) from Rubens; this was dated from Rome on the 28th of October, as the painter was on the point of mounting his horse (*salendo a Cavallo*) to return to Antwerp. He says "that he considers it his duty, as his Highness has not returned to Mantua, to give him an account of the necessity which compels him to act almost impertinently, in adding to his already long absence another in a distant country, though he hopes it may be a short one. The cause is that the day but one before he wrote, very bad news had come of the state of his mother's health; who, besides being otherwise ill, has in addition a very bad attack of asthma, which, as she is now seventy-two, he could not hope would have any other termination than that which is common to man. It would be a hard matter for him to go to such a sight, and as hard to go without the leave of his patron. He had, however, consulted with Signor Magno, and concluded it would be well to act from what might happen on the road, and according to the news he might receive to keep to this plan or that. It consoled him not a little that during his Highness's stay in Antwerp his family had requested his

return, and fully informed Signors Felippo Persia and Annibale Iberti of the need of his presence, by which means he had good hope of the compassion of his Highness in such a case. But the evil would not then have become so desperate as it is now.

"He begs his Highness to be so good as to give an account to 'Madama Serenissima' (the Duchess) of his misfortune, and to excuse him for saving time by not joining the Duke, or going to Mantua, but taking the straight road with all diligence. Of his return he will not say more than that he will always be ready to execute the wishes of his patron, and to observe his directions inviolably in all places and at all times. His three pictures in the New Church were finished, and, if he was not deceived, he had been successful in them, although, owing to his haste, he left before they were uncovered (the marble ornaments not being finished).

"On his return from Flanders he could come straight to Mantua, which would be more to his taste for many reasons, and especially as he might then present himself to his Highness. And so he begs to kiss his hands."

Here ends Rubens's sojourn in Italy. Though he more than once expressed a wish to return thither, he never had an opportunity, and, what is stranger still, no further communications between him and the Duke of Mantua ever seem to have taken place. The fact of his not accompanying the Duke to Flanders, coupled with the total silence of the Records of Mantua about him for the future (with the exception of three slight incidental allusions in the letters of Priandi, the Resident in Paris), leads one to imagine that some umbrage had been taken by the Duke at Rubens's

anxiety to return to Rome; but, on the other hand, the last-quoted letter is scarcely consistent with such a theory. Long afterwards, in the year 1630, writing to his friend, Peiresc, and speaking of the sack of Mantua, he says, "This grieves me extremely, from having served the house of Gonzaga many years, and having enjoyed a most delightful residence in that country during my youth. *Sic erat in fatis.*" ("Sainsbury," p. 153 and 263.)

CHAPTER V.

SETTLED AT ANTWERP.

1608 TO 1620.

RUBENS mounted his horse in Rome on the 28th of October, 1608, to travel northwards to Brabant. He journeyed with a heavy heart; and, on his way, he met the news he dreaded. His mother had died nine days before he started. For four months he remained in seclusion in the Abbey of St. Michael, in the church of which she was buried; and there he and his brother Philip raised a handsome monument to that careful, loving, much-tried woman, to whom the whole family owed so much—more, probably, than these younger members were aware of.

The painter was now in his thirty-second year—a man of considerable beauty and presence, dignified and intelligent. He had studied his art among the foremost professors of it, in the cradle of all the arts,—the mother city, Rome; he had mingled in Courts, and consorted with statesmen, courtiers, and princes; he had gained "knowledge by travel, which still makes up a complete Gentleman;" and having made himself a name, "not altogether unknown" in Spain and Italy, had returned to the city of his fathers on the Scheldt. He talked of returning to

Italy, as he had implied to the Duke of Mantua; but circumstances prevented this. He was too well known to be allowed to leave without an attempt to retain him. His brother Philip had become a man of some importance. A pupil of Lipsius, tutor of the younger Richardot, he had by July, 1609, been appointed Secretary of Antwerp; and in the course of the previous year had brought out a handsome volume of "Excerpta" at the Plantin Press. About the same time he married Maria de Moy, sister of Clara, who had been married much earlier to Jan Brandt, also Secretary of Antwerp. A daughter, Isabella, was the issue of the last-mentioned marriage; and the aunt's wedding probably hastened Peter Paul's resolve to console himself for the loss of his mother by marrying the niece. On the 13th of October, 1609, at the Abbey Church of St. Michael, "Petrus Pawels Rubens" espoused "Joffe Isabella Brant." For some years the newly married couple resided with Jan Brandt, whose son Henry was the close friend and companion of the painter during the rest of his life. Philip Rubens, in one of his letters, speaks with much delight of this marriage, which would unite him more closely with his brother.

The celebrated picture of Rubens and his first wife, now in the Pinakothek at Munich, must have been painted within the first few years of their married life, and is a striking example of the painter's manner at this period. His calm serenity and thoughtful expression, combined with beauty and force of character, are well balanced by the placid contentment and happy dignity of his wife, as the pair sit under their own vine and fig-tree, prepared to receive their visitors. There is no affected demonstration of feeling, no bashful restraint. A couple well-to-do

RUBENS AND HIS FIRST WIFE, ISABELLA BRANDT.

From the painting by Rubens at Munich.

and able to enjoy themselves are happy to share their pleasure with others. .

Shortly before his marriage, on the 23rd of September, Rubens was nominated Court painter to the Archdukes, as they were called, Albert and the Infanta Clara Eugenia Isabella. This position, which gave him a pension of 500 Flemish livres, equivalent to 500 florins of Brabant (about £50), was similar to that which he had held at Mantua, and with these "chains of gold," as his nephew calls them, he seems to have been stayed from his contemplated journey to Italy. In the same year, too, he was admitted by Jan (surnamed Velvet) Brueghel into the guild of St. Peter and St. Paul of the Romanists (or those who had visited the Eternal City) of which his old master, van Veen, had been dean the previous year. On the occasion of his admission he painted two panels with figures of St. Peter and St. Paul, the patron saints of the guild and of himself, which were carefully preserved by the guild as late as 1757. Velvet Brueghel was his firm friend, and assisted him in some of his work, and they remained greatly attached until Brueghel's death.

By the pictures he had painted in Italy, Rubens must have made a considerable sum of money, part of which he laid out with artistic knowledge, zeal, and judgment, in antiquities, pictures, statues, cameos, and jewels, of which he had a vast collection. In 1610 he bought a plot of land, and proceeded to build a house after his own fancy in the Italian style, and he decorated it with frescoes by his own hand. That he had already, like many of the early painters, studied architecture to some purpose, we see by the plans and elevations he published in 1622 of the *Palazzi antichi di Genova.* As he never visited Italy again,

these measurements and drawings must have been made before this time. Drawings of his house still exist. In the garden he erected a rotunda, which was in imitation of the Pantheon at Rome, and was lighted from above. Of this he formed a studio, and in it placed his statues, busts, bas-reliefs, porphyry vases, onyxes, agates, medals, and pictures—said to be more worthy of a prince than a private gentleman. According to Houbraken, this house cost him 60,000 florins.

The story has for a long time been told that, in building, he unwittingly trespassed on land belonging to the Company of Arquebussiers of Antwerp. A lawsuit was threatened, and Rubens applied to his friend, the burgomaster Rockox, captain of the company, who soon showed him that he was in the wrong. Under these circumstances, he thought it advisable to come to a compromise with the company, and in return for the small portion of land he had appropriated, he agreed to paint for them a picture of their patron, St. Christopher, to be set up in the chapel of the cathedral dedicated to that saint. In fulfilment of this bargain, it is said that Rubens painted his famous 'Descent from the Cross,' which still remains in its original position. It forms a part of a triptych, on the wings of which are represented 'St. Simon' and 'The Visitation,' whilst St. Christopher in person, with his usual accompaniments, the hermit and owl, was reserved for the exterior. The tale adds that the crass intellects of the Antwerpian burghers did not perceive how the three former pictures fulfilled the condition of representing Christopheros (the Christ-bearer), and that therefore the saint himself, with a hermit and lantern, and an owl to denote the burghers, was afterwards added to satisfy their scruples. That which

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS.

From the painting by Rubens in Antwerp Cathedral.

gave its name to the subject is not the most striking part of the composition, and so gives some colour to the story; but the fact is, the picture was ordered by the company, paid for by instalments, exhibited in their rooms, and finally removed to the cathedral. The whole sum which Rubens received, 2,400 florins, was not paid in full until December, 1622. The one fact out of which the whole tale arose was that a party-wall between Rubens's garden and that of the company was pulled down and rebuilt, and that the painter and the company paid between them for the 323 pots of beer that were consumed by the workmen whilst rebuilding it!

These pictures are too well known to require much criticism in our limited space. Two of them, the 'Descent from the Cross' and 'The Visitation,' are given in this volume. They exhibit to the full the immense pictorial power of the painter, his boldness of colouring, his vividness of conception, whilst at the same time they are deficient in that touching elevation of true art which is to be found in the works of many of the religious painters of earlier ages who cannot approach Rubens in the technicalities of painting. The grouping is natural, concentrated, and agreeable; the colouring is most powerful and true, dealing with difficulties previously unattempted by others; the drawing, though influenced by a desire for the gigantesque and the massive, is true and careful; the expressions are human and real; but there is a lack of refinement, of delicacy, and of suggestiveness. The dead Humanity oppresses the whole picture, the Divine Life has departed, and we are bearers of Christ's burden without feeling that it is a Cross to elevate us nearer to Him. In confirmation of the opinion we have here expressed, we cannot

resist quoting what M. Alfred Michiels says: "An anti-Christian conception inspired the 'Descent from the Cross,' and never did a less pious work adorn a church. A Pantheist would not have executed it differently. The body of Jesus is not that of a God, which is to rise again the third day; it is the remains of a man, in which the flame of life has ceased to burn."

Work now poured in upon our painter rapidly, and he could not have accomplished it all had he not been most methodical in his doings. According to the Latin life of him by his nephew Philip, he was accustomed to rise very early; in summer at four o'clock, and immediately afterwards he heard mass, unless the gout, from which he suffered greatly, prevented him. He then went to work; and while painting he habitually employed a person to read to him a book of Plutarch or Seneca; so that his mind was simultaneously employed on reading and painting. "This was the time," says Dr. Waagen, still following the Latin life, "when he generally received his visitors, with whom he entered willingly into conversation on a variety of topics, in the most animated and agreeable manner. An hour before dinner he always devoted to recreation, which consisted either in allowing his thoughts to dwell as they listed on subjects connected with science or politics, which latter interested him deeply, or in contemplating his treasures of art. From anxiety not to impair the brilliant play of his fancy, he indulged but sparingly in the pleasures of the table, and drank but little wine. After working again till the evening, he usually, if not prevented by business, mounted a spirited Andalusian horse, and rode for an hour or two. This was his favourite exercise; he was extremely fond of horses, and his stables generally

contained some of remarkable beauty. On his return home, it was his custom to receive a few friends, principally men of learning or artists, with whom he shared his frugal meal, and afterwards passed the evening in instructive and cheerful conversation. This active and regular mode of life could alone have enabled Rubens to satisfy all the demands that were made upon him as an artist, and the astonishing number of works that he completed, the genuineness of which is beyond all doubt, can only be accounted for by this union of extraordinary diligence with his unusually fertile powers of production."

It is said that when Rubens first returned from Italy, those who had heard somewhat of his fame were anxious to see his sketches or some of his more finished works. "It would be difficult to show them to you; they are in my head," was the sole satisfaction they could get from the painter.

A story of a more apocryphal character represents that Janssens was jealous of the rising fame of one who seemed likely to supplant him; and that he sent a challenge to Rubens to paint a picture on the same subject, and let the critics of Antwerp decide which was the better man. Rubens prudently abstained from entering on this contest, remarking that his pictures had received the approbation of the best judges in Italy and Spain, where they were still to be seen both in public and private galleries, and that when Janssens had put his own work to a like test it would be time enough to talk of a public trial. Rubens contrived to live down these jealousies. He was accustomed to say of such feeling, "Do well, and people will be jealous of you—do better, and you will overcome their jealousy."

His royal patrons the Archdukes sent for him to Brussels to paint a Holy Family. This picture was exhibited, and it induced the Chapter of the Order of St. Ildefonso to commission the Court painter to execute for their altar in the Caudenberg Church at Brussels a triptych, which has now been transferred to Vienna. The central portion represents the Virgin presenting to the Saint himself the chasuble of the Order, whilst the right wing (on the spectator's left), one of those portrait masterpieces in which Rubens excelled, represents the Archduke, accompanied by his patron saint, kneeling in the dress of the Order; the left wing similarly represents the Infanta Isabella with St. Clara. The exterior was adorned with another Holy Family. The Order was greatly gratified with the picture, and commissioned their treasurer to present the artist with a purse of gold. This, however, Rubens gracefully refused. Works of this kind, and the patronage of the Court, brought the painter into general notice, and all the principal churches and towns in the Spanish Netherlands vied with each other in their endeavours to possess some of his greater works.

In the year 1611 Rubens met with another loss, which he must have felt very deeply—that of his only surviving brother, Philip. His eldest brother, Jan Baptist, had died at Antwerp in the year of the painter's departure into Italy; his sister, Blandina, who had married Simon Duparckq, died in 1606, during his absence; the rest of the family had died before the return from Cologne, so that now Peter Paul was alone left of his generation. His brother Philip left a widow and a daughter not a year and a half old; a postumous son was born rather more than two months after the father's death. This child was named Philip after his father, and survived to write a short life in

RUBENS'S TWO SONS.

From the painting by Rubens in Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna.

Latin of his illustrious uncle, which for a long time was attributed to Gevaerts (Gevartius).

It was not until the 5th of June, 1614, that Rubens's eldest son was born. The Archduke Albert became his godfather, and gave him his own name. Nearly four years after, the only other child by his first wife saw the light. These are the two boys whose portraits we give on the next page. They both survived their father, and the eldest succeeded to the active enjoyment of the office which his father had held, but of which he fulfilled the duties by proxy—the clerkship to the Council of Brabant.

During the period of which we have been speaking, Rubens painted some of his greatest works. 'Our Saviour giving the keys to St. Peter' was originally placed in the Cathedral of St. Gudule, at Brussels, as a memorial picture; it was sold in 1824 to the Prince of Orange for £25,000. An 'Elevation of the Cross,' an immense picture with a great number of figures covering the centre and wings of a triptych, on the exterior of which were painted St. Catherine and St. Eloy, was executed for the Church of St. Walburg, at Antwerp, but is now in the cathedral. For an 'Adoration of the Magi,' to be placed in the choir of the Abbey Church of St. Michael, where his mother was buried and he had himself been married, he received after some demur 3,000 florins. One of his best pictures, 'St. Theresa pleading for the souls in Purgatory,' originally in the church of the Carmelites, at Antwerp; and two others, 'St. Anne instructing the Virgin' and the 'Dead Saviour laid on a stone,' are now in the Museum at Antwerp. An 'Adoration of the Magi,' for the Church of St. John at Mechlin, was painted in 1616. This Rubens considered the best of his works on this subject, which he painted so

frequently. On the interior of the wings he painted the deaths of the two St. Johns, the Baptist, and the Evangelist and Apostle, and on the exterior the same two saints in their retirement, the one in the wilderness and the other at Patmos. These five pictures, together with three others, 'Christ on the Cross,' 'The Resurrection of our Saviour,' and 'The Adoration of the Shepherds,' afterwards removed to Marseilles by Napoleon I., were painted in eighteen days, and paid for at the rate at which Rubens usually valued his work, viz., 100 guilders (£10) a day. The eight thus cost £180, as Rubens's receipt, still preserved at Mechlin, shows.

In the meanwhile, the Jesuits—a body which, under the influence of Philip II. had acquired immense power in the Netherlands, especially by undertaking the education of the young—built a magnificent church, which has been described as a temple of the Arts rather than of God; and in the construction and interior decoration of this church, Rubens was consulted and employed. The high altar was adorned with two of his works, and two other altars in the church also had pictures by him, but besides, he painted no less than thirty-nine ceilings with scenes from the Bible, including the Ascension and Coronation of the Virgin, and pictures of various saints. The whole of this work was unfortunately destroyed in the last century (1718) by a fire caused by lightning, but not until some eighteen of the principal designs had been drawn in red chalk by Jacob de Wit, and engraved by Jean Punt and by Preisler. Several of the subjects, such as the 'Ascension of our Saviour,' 'Ascension of Elijah,' the 'Ascension and Coronation of the Virgin,' the 'Archangel Michael triumphing over the Serpent,' are exceedingly well adapted

for treatment on ceilings, and Rubens—owing probably to his lofty rotunda studio—was particularly successful in the perspective and foreshortening of such subjects; we cannot, however, but agree with Dr. Waagen, that the ancients were wise in avoiding such positions for pictures, for besides the difficulty of contemplating them in ordinary postures, it is almost impossible to throw a proper light upon works so placed; besides which, in these latitudes at least, we require a light, if not a perfectly white, surface, in order to reflect light downwards upon us as we get it out of doors from the skies.

Rubens was affable to all the world. No man knew better how to make himself agreeable, even to those who were inclined to quarrel with him, but at the same time no one knew better where to draw the line between those who were thus allowed to share in his kindly conversation, and those who were to be admitted into the inmost shrine of his intimate friendship. When the doors were shut, and the candles lighted, and the frugal supper set, the burgomaster, Nicolas Rockox, did not knock in vain, Jan Gaspar Gevaerts received a hearty and a learned welcome, Jan Brandt and his son Henry might look in, Philip Rubens, so long as he lived, received a warm pressure of the hand, and a joke about what they had seen or done in Rome in those pleasant bachelor days; some of the more advanced and intimate of his pupils drew round the hearth, and a learned conversation on antiquities, medals, or artistic gems flowed unrestrainedly. On other evenings there were letters to be written to learned men at a distance, to Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc, the antiquarian of Provence, the friend of learned men all over Europe; to Valaves his brother, when the former left Paris for the

South; to J. or P. Dupuy, whilst this latter was away from Paris too; and in later days to the Count-Duke Olivares, the Minister in Spain; occasionally to the Marquis of Spinola, and even to the Infanta herself. Rubens's evenings, leaving off work as he did at five or six o'clock, according to the time of year, were not idle. He collected good books, sent copies of those that issued from the Plantin Press to his friends at a distance, and eagerly received their literary contributions in return, but he had no time to spend in reading rubbish (*poltronerie*).

In the meantime the amount of work produced by him was enormous. Not only did he receive much assistance from his pupils, but his own time must have been economized to the uttermost. The students in his studio were numerous, and he was able to make a selection amongst those who were anxious to enter it. Anthony van Dyck, Jacob Jordaens, and Frans Snyders, especially did him good service. It was Rubens's habit to sketch out a subject in oil-colours on a small scale. Numbers of these works still exist, such, for instance, as the sketches at Munich for the Luxembourg series, and several of the designs for the Whitehall ceiling, to be seen in private galleries in England. These sketches would be handed over to a pupil, who, on the full-sized canvas, would advance the picture, mostly, however, under the eye of the master, who from time to time would even make alterations in his arrangement of figures, and then finally himself set to work, putting in the vigorous touches which made the work so much his own. But with all this the work was done in his own way. His pupils were taught his peculiar method. The transparent glazes of which he made such use, admitted of being thus dealt with by two persons; and though Rubens received much

THE VISION OF SAINT ILDEFONSO.

The centre picture of an altar-piece: a triptych.

From the painting by Rubens in the Belvedere.

help from the *hands* of others, he would not admit their alteration of his ideas, nor adopt the original work of other men. Thus when he was supposed to have received considerable help from Snyders in painting some living animals, Tobie Matthew, writing to Sir Dudley Carleton, in 1617, says, "that he should take it in ill part if I should compare Snyders with him in that point. The talent of Snyders is to represent beasts but especiallie Birds altogether dead, & wholly wthout anie action: & that wch y^{r} L^{p} M^{r}. Gage & I sawe of his hand wch we liked soe well was a Gruppo of dead Birds in a picture of Diana & certaine other naked Nimphes, as Rubens protesteth, and M^{r}. Gage avoweth, & now myself doe well remember it."[1]

M. A. Michiels tells a story to show that some of those who bought his pictures were, like Sir Dudley Carleton, a little jealous lest they should be put off with "apprentice work." He was engaged to paint a picture of the Last Supper for the Cathedral at Mechlin. The artist having made his sketch, sent Justus van Egmont to make a beginning of the picture. The canon who had ordered the painting was not best pleased at receiving the disciple instead of the master, and inquired why the latter did not come. He was told he would come, as he usually did, to finish it. Time went on and the picture was progressing, and still no Rubens came. At length the canon wrote a furious letter

[1] Besides those mentioned above, he had as assistants or pupils, Justus van Egmont, Peter van Mol, Cornelis Schut, Jan van Hoeck, Simon de Vos, Deodato van der Mont or Delmont, Nicolas van der Horst, Mompers, Jan Wildens, Jaques Moermans, Willem Panneels, Peter Soutmans, Erasmus Quellyn, Jan Bronchorst, David Teniers the Younger, Theodore van Thulden, Abraham van Diepenbeck, Frans Wouters, Gerard van Herp, Jean Thomas, Matthew van den Berg, Samuel Hofman, Jan van Stok, Nicolai, Pennemaeckers, and Jan Victor Wolfvoet.

to the painter, requesting him to come himself or recall Justus. Rubens answered assuring the canon that he was not the victim of a fraud. "I always proceed in this manner; after having made the sketch, I leave my pupil to begin the picture, and work it out according to my principles; then I retouch it and set my seal upon it. I shall come to Mechlin in a few days; your discontent will then cease." He kept his word, and the canon recovered his serenity when he saw the master's touches on the picture.

Rubens was now a prosperous man; he possessed a handsome house, and a magnificent collection of such rarities as he loved; he was married into one of the families of highest standing in Antwerp; he was attached to the household of the Archdukes and employed by them; and he was popular as an artist, having as much work as he knew how to accomplish even with all the help of his pupils. Like many other men of the day, he was interested in the scientific discoveries which were then beginning to be made, and—like his contemporaries—he was not able to discern at all times between the true and the false in the science of the time. He thinks that a friend has discovered perpetual motion, and proposes to send "an instrument complete with a box," to Peiresc, though he considers that Drebbel's "perpetual motion in a glass ring is a mere toy," and speaks rather disparagingly of "the optical cannon which, standing perpendicularly, increases extraordinarily the things put beneath it." So differently do we judge of perpetual motion and microscopes now! He was not a man, however, to spend either time or money on doubtful researches. Walpole tells a story of an Englishman named Brondel or Brendel, formerly a painter, afterwards an alchemist, who wanted Rubens to furnish him with a laboratory and apparatus for

the process of transmutation of metals, promising to divide the profits with him. "You have come twenty years too late," said the painter, smiling, "I found out the secret long ago;" and pointing to his palette and brushes he added, "Everything I touch with these turns to gold."

That Rubens knew how to make a bargain is clear, too, from Tobie Matthew's correspondence with Sir D. Carleton (given in Sainsbury) about the exchange of a diamond necklace for a picture. He would neither give more for the diamonds nor would he sell his "great peece of huntinge," "a penye under fowerscore pounds, whereof your chaine was nowe lastly valewed in Antwerp but at fiftye." But he will make another smaller picture of it for the chain. In the meantime he sells the original to the Duke of Ariscott (Arschot?) for the hundred pounds which he esteemed it to be "richly worth." We constantly find that he complains of not being paid at once, and sometimes even when he admits that there is good excuse for not doing so.

CHAPTER VI.

PARIS AND ANTWERP.

1620 TO 1625.

RUBENS'S fame was now widely spread. He was known in Italy, Spain, and Flanders. Engravings of many of his largest works were being multiplied, insomuch that the sale of them in France was a privilege he considered it worth some trouble on his own part, as well as the intervention of his friends, to retain, though he afterwards declared he gained nothing by his efforts: in 1620, at all events, Vosterman produced some of his finest plates. About this time the Queen-mother, Maria de' Medici, being reconciled to her son Louis XIII., was adorning her palace of the Luxembourg, in Paris, with the greatest magnificence, and was looking out for some painter to carry out the work of decoration. Henri, Baron Vicq, the Ambassador of Albert and Isabella at the Court of Paris, spoke of the painter of the Court that he represented. No doubt Maria de' Medici had heard from her sister, the Duchess of Mantua, and from other members of her family who had seen him in Florence and elsewhere, of the courtly grace as well as the artistic excellence and fertile imagination of the Fleming. Rubens was summoned to Paris. He

HENRI IV. CONFIDING THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE TO HIS WIFE, MARIE DE MÉDICIS.

From the painting by Rubens, in the Louvre.

was shown the great gallery that was to be adorned, and no doubt, as we find on other occasions, he took accurate measurements of the spaces to be covered, and made his sketches. These were approved. They have now passed into the Pinakothek at Munich, so that it is possible in this case to compare the earliest thought as it arose in the painter's mind with the completed work, not exactly perhaps as it left his studio, for the pictures now in the Louvre have suffered considerable restoration, but at all events with the forms and sizes that he afterwards produced.

Rubens then returned to Antwerp; the large body of assistants and pupils were soon in full employment, and the huge rotunda had its capabilities for space and light tested to the uttermost. For even this enormous order for one-and-twenty of the largest pictures did not content him. He still undertook altar-pieces and other commission pictures. His imagination must have been constantly at work. We see, in fact, in some cases, how he did work out his ideas. Some of the sacred subjects which appear in churches, such as the 'Adoration of the Magi,' 'Susannah and the Elders,' and 'Lot's Daughters,' he painted over and over again, suiting the composition to the form the picture had to take, changing the point of view, re-arranging the figures, and rejecting old ideas or embodying fresh ones, as he considered them more or less important. What seems to us so extraordinary—the realistic treatment of Christian subjects through the medium of contemporary costume and physiognomy, and still more the incongruous blending of Christian with Pagan ideas—was to a certain extent characteristic of the time. But Rubens carried this mingling of the real and the imaginary to excess, and

nowhere does this appear more strongly than in such a series of paintings as the Luxembourg pictures now in the Louvre, or the ceilings of Whitehall Chapel. Rubens's allegories were so far-fetched that they were not always intelligible even to sympathetic contemporaries. He complains that figures crowned with towers and drawn by lions are mistaken by the writer of an explanatory Latin poem for the Goddess Cybele or Rhea, whereas he intended to personify the cities of Florence in the fourth picture, and Lyons in the ninth. So too his 'Happy Hours' are misunderstood to be Cupids or Zephyrs.

Rubens was not forgetful of the personage to whom he owed his introduction to the Queen. He painted for Baron de Vicq a 'Virgin and Child,' besides portraits of himself and his wife. Naturally the work connected with the Queen's pictures required Rubens's frequent presence in Paris. We find that he was there during the summer of 1622, and that some of these paintings were inspected by the Queen in June, 1623, but the whole (in spite of what most of the biographers, and even the usually accurate Dr. Lemcke, say to the contrary) was not finished until the beginning of the year 1625. It was probably in the earlier journey that he had considerable intercourse with the Queen herself. Walpole says that he gave her lessons in drawing. She seems at all events to have been delighted with the pictures and with the painter. She used often to converse with him whilst he was at work, and no doubt had explanations given her of all the recondite meanings of the allegories, which were flattering enough in themselves. On one occasion she is said to have consulted the painter as to his opinion about the beauties of the Court, and he was introduced into the Court circle where they were all

assembled, in order that he might decide as to their opposing claims. Whatever might have been the expectation or desire of the Queen, on her demanding his decision, he gave an unhesitating preference to the Duchess de Guéménée, who had had the tact to make herself very agreeable to the artist. The Queen, moreover, showed her appreciation of his works by ordering other pictures—a likeness of herself as Bellona, and full-length portraits of her father and mother, the Duke Francis of Tuscany and Anne of Austria. As Rubens could never have seen these two personages, since they were dead many years before he went to Italy, he must have worked from previous portraits by other artists.

Before Rubens left Paris he was employed to make cartoons for some tapestry which was to be produced in Brussels for the King of France, Louis XIII. These were quickly finished, for in the beginning of 1626 he complains of not having received payment for them. There was also an intention of constructing another gallery at the Luxembourg, which Rubens was to adorn with the life of Henry IV., as he had already done the former with that of his Queen. The building progressed, and the painter heard rumours of others being employed upon the work of which he thought himself sure. His jealousy on this occasion rather detracts from that grandiose disdain of petty considerations which he showed in his earlier life. He finds, however, that he is to be employed after all, and he evidently set to work, for after his death several pictures on the subject of the life of Henry IV. were in the catalogue of his effects. Two of these are now in Florence. The breaking out of the quarrel between the Queen and Cardinal Richelieu, and her subsequent withdrawal into the Netherlands, prevented

the completion of this project. He complains greatly of the delay, and also of the insufficiency of the payment he received from the Queen. When in Paris he writes to Peiresc in Provence, complaining that the coming marriage (of the Queen's daughter, the Princess Henrietta Maria) delayed his accounts, and that he 'was tired of this Court.' (*Io mi stuffo di questa corte.*) He afterwards reckons that "this work of the Queen has been very prejudicial to me if we do not allow the generosity of the Duke of Buckingham (he spells the name Boucquingham) to enter into the account."

During this period of his great success, Rubens met with some of those losses which often seem sent to a man in the supreme hour of his prosperity—like the slave in the general's triumph, or the mummy in the Egyptian feast—to remind him that he is but mortal. First, in the beginning of the year 1625, he lost his friend Velvet Brueghel, whose daughters he took under his charge; at a later period, one of them married his pupil, the younger David Teniers. Rubens wrote the inscription for the tomb of Brueghel.

In the middle of the next year, 1626 (either in June or, at all events, before the 15th of July), he sustained a greater loss—that of his wife Isabella Brandt. They had been married sixteen years, and had two sons, one twelve and the other eight years old. She was buried with much pomp in the Abbey Church of St. Michael, where his mother lay; and on the following Michaelmas-day he dedicated a picture of the 'Virgin and Child' to her memory. The fact of the accompanying tablet having this date, led the older biographers to give that as the time of her death; but he refers to his loss in a letter to Pierre Dupuy

on the 15th July, in the following words, which certainly seem a little cold, but perhaps receive that character from the fact of his correspondent being a stranger to his family circle: "I have in truth lost a very good (*buonissima*) companion, whom one can, or rather ought, to love with reason for not having any of the vices of her sex. She was without bad temper, or feminine frivolity, but was in every way good and honourable—in life loved on account of her virtues, and since her death universally bewailed by all. Such a loss seems to me worthy of sympathy, and because the true remedy for all evils is forgetfulness, the daughter of time, one must without doubt hope for relief; but I find the separation of grief for the departed from the memory of a person whom I ought to revere and honour whilst I live, to be very difficult. I believe a journey to be the right thing to relieve me from the sight of many objects which necessarily renew my grief, *ut illa sola domo mœret vacua stratisque relictis incubat*, and the novelty which the eyes ever undergo from the change of country occupies the mind in a way which affords no room for a recurrence of the bond."

The journey that Rubens made was into Holland. It lasted only a fortnight, but it had more than one motive, and it led to considerable results. No doubt his loss made such a change advisable, and he was also anxious to see something of the Dutch school of painters. On this journey he made the acquaintance of Sandrart, who has left us some particulars of his life at this period, which are more or less trustworthy; he also met with Gerard Honthorst, whose picture of Diogenes, with Rubens's portrait as 'the honest man,' he bought. Another acquaintance he made on this occasion was Bloemaert. But the journey was also

one of several that he took in the same direction with a political intention. A peace between his own country and the Dutch, which might restore prosperity to Antwerp, had been his dream ever since the signature of the truce in 1609, which had been one of the inducements to him to settle down in his paternal city; and peace with the Dutch implied peace with England. He hoped that these two great objects of his life might be forwarded by some of the friends he made in the United Provinces. But this subject is more proper to the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

RUBENS AS A DIPLOMATIST.

1626 TO 1629.

THE acquaintance with the Duke of Buckingham, which we have alluded to above, had important results for the courtly painter. It began when the Duke was in Paris to discuss the terms of the treaty with France, in view of the marriage of Charles with Henrietta Maria. On this occasion he was not likely to act with less than his usual profusion. He had two portraits painted by Rubens, for which he gave the painter £500, the pay, according to Rubens's usual mode of reckoning, for fifty days of his own work, a period that could scarcely be employed on these two pictures. During the sitting there was opportunity for conversation. Rubens was ever interested in the affairs of nations. His own country suffered much from the unfortunate war in which England and the Dutch were contending with Spain, making Belgium, then the Spanish Netherlands (at all times the battle-field of Europe), the sufferer for the contentions of others. Since the death of the Archduke Albert, in 1621, Rubens had had more intimate knowledge of the views of the Infanta Isabella, and of the Marquis of Spinola, "the only man,"

he says, "who had much influence with her." He could speak of the views in favour of peace which they had endeavoured to impress (unsuccessfully, he might have added, but there was no advantage to be gained by so saying) upon the Court of Spain. He probably did not at that time know that the personal dislike of the Minister Olivares for Charles's favourite was sufficient to keep Europe plunged in war for many years longer. Buckingham also had in his suite a painter, Balthazar Gerbier by name, who was French by parentage, though his father was actually born in Antwerp, "a man at home in every nation, and specially attached to none." The son of a native of Antwerp, who did not belong to that city, and the man who was thoroughly Antwerpian, though not born there, had at all events enough in common to induce them to keep up a good deal of intercourse, especially as the higher powers on each side made use of the unobserved intercourse of the two painters, as a means to arrive at the demands and requirements of their opponents.

Towards the end of the year Buckingham, on the occasion of a diplomatic journey to Holland, paid a visit to the painter's remarkable studio, which was greatly in accordance with his own extravagant taste. He was much pleased with the grand collection of antiques, statues, bas-reliefs, precious stones, &c., and immediately showed his desire to possess them. Rubens was not anxious to part with his collection, but at length, through the mediation of Le Blon, or Blondel, of Amsterdam, a connoisseur of those days, he was induced to accept for it £10,000, on condition that the buyer would furnish him, at his own cost, with casts of the statues, busts, and bas-reliefs. Walpole is inclined to think that Rubens made a very

THE VISITATION.

One of the wings to "The Crucifixion."

From the painting by Rubens in Antwerp Cathedral.

good bargain in thus selling what did not cost him £1,000; but we can hardly think it very extravagant when we consider that nineteen Titians, twenty-one Bassanos, thirteen Paolo Veroneses, eight Palma Vecchios, seventeen Tintorettos, three Leonardo da Vincis, three Raphaels, and thirteen pictures by Rubens himself, formed a *part* of the collection. After the Duke's death a few of these were disposed of in England, but a great part of the collection was sent back to Antwerp for sale before the sequestration of the Buckingham estate in 1649, and was purchased by the then Viceroy, the Archduke Leopold, who added it to his collection at Prague. Several of these works were afterwards removed to Vienna, where they may be now seen in the Belvedere Gallery. It was reported not long since that a further portion had been discovered still at Prague, but we have failed to obtain any clear account of them.

The treaty for this collection was begun in the end of 1625, but it was not concluded at least as late as September, 1627. In the meantime, many conversations, and some correspondence, had taken place between Rubens and Gerbier, Buckingham not being much inclined to peace whilst there was any hope of glory to be got from the Cadiz expedition. In the early part of 1627, when the negotiations for the collection still afforded a pretext for communication, Rubens again made proposals, much as he had done in Paris two years before. They now fell upon more willing ears. Gerbier was sent to Brussels to propose a treaty which was to include the Dutch and Denmark, and Rubens soon let him understand that no peace could be made with England and the Dutch unless the latter could be induced to open the Scheldt, and give

up their claim to independence; in fact, to forfeit all for which they had fought so long. The Spaniards were willing, however, to treat with the English alone, but not to "embroil the business with other undertakings." Gerbier went to England with these proposals. They did not suit Charles, who determined not to give up his allies. Buckingham, however, wrote, intimating a willingness to conclude a separate treaty and to discuss it secretly. Gerbier was again sent to Holland, where he was to meet Rubens, who, in spite of having a passport sent him, did not care to go further than Zevenberghen, a neutral place. This gave rise to more delay. Gerbier refused to go to Zevenberghen; whereupon Rubens got leave from Brussels to go to Breda. He afterwards went on to Rotterdam and Amsterdam, returning by way of Utrecht. Nothing could be done at that time, however, because the King of Spain's representative, who had powers to treat, was laid up ill at Paris on the road. After a time, the cause of the illness of Don Diego Messia, at Paris, came out. Buckingham had entirely failed, both as a politician and as a military man at Rochelle, and the Kings of Spain and France made a league for the defence of their kingdoms. Rubens was thus foiled in his good intentions. "As to myself," he writes, "this bad success is a great regret to me, quite contrary to our good intentions, but my conscience acquits me of having failed, in all sincerity and industry, to endeavour to bring everything to a good end, if God had not ordained otherwise."

In spite of the failure of these negotiations, which had lasted during eight months of 1627, Rubens still kept up an occasional correspondence with Gerbier, hoping almost against hope that something might come of it in time.

The utter failure of Buckingham in his operations against the isle of Rhé during the autumn, although he had been so confident of success, gave better prospects to the next negotiation. The Infanta and her Minister Spinola were still desirous of peace, but the necessities of the Netherlands were not considered in the councils of Spain. Gerbier, and the Duke of Savoy's Minister then in London, the Abbé Scaglia, wrote to Rubens, who was authorized to ask the former to send what proposals he had to make, to Spinola, at Madrid. At length the latter, in the beginning of the new year, 1628, set out with Don Messia, who had brought the news of what had been the bar to their diplomatic proceedings, and with Spinola Rubens thenceforth kept up a correspondence.

In the meantime, Rubens meets with the King of Denmark's Resident at the Hague, and learns from him that his master has a fair disposition to treat about peace. After some negotiations he conveys him to Brussels, and writes a full account to Spinola of this matter, giving him also a short summary of the fresh communications he has had with Gerbier and Scaglia, he having received long rigmarole letters from the former in two or three languages, showing in the main that Charles and his Ministers were inclined to treat. These accounts having been communicated by Spinola to Philip IV., his Majesty wrote to the Infanta, desiring that Rubens should send all the correspondence to Madrid. Rubens expressed his willingness to do so, but since no one but himself could understand the letters (which from the numerous extant specimens of Gerbier's writing we can well believe), offered to bring them himself to Madrid. The Infanta seconded the proposal.

In the meantime, the Earl of Carlisle, who had been sent by Charles I. on an embassy to Lorraine and Savoy, asked for a passport to traverse the Netherlands, which was given him on condition that he did not go through Brussels. He came by way of Antwerp, and, complaining of the exception made in his case alone, was invited to the capital, and had an audience with the Infanta. On the receipt of Rubens's answer, Philip IV. consulted the Junta as to whether his offer should be accepted, and it was agreed that it should; "but," added the King, "he is not to be urged to come; it is for him to see whether it is for his own interest to make the journey." Rubens willingly accepted the invitation to Spain.

The order for Rubens's departure was given on the 4th of July, and despatched on the 6th. On the 10th of August, Rubens writes to his friend Dupuy of his approaching departure, and on the 13th the Infanta reports that he will start in a few days. He passed rapidly through France, seeing none of his friends in Paris, who might have asked inconvenient questions; but he did turn aside slightly from his route to see the great event of the time, the siege of Rochelle, "which appeared to me," he says, "a spectacle worthy of all admiration." He arrived in Madrid in the first half of September. His coming excited much curiosity among the various diplomatists in that capital; the Papal Nuncio and the Venetian Ambassador report it to their governments, unable to decide whether England or the Dutch were the subjects of his negotiations.

In Brussels the Infanta received still further communications from the Abbé Scaglia and Gerbier, who passed through on their way to Turin; with them came Endymion Porter, who then continued his journey to Madrid as the

THE LION HUNT.

In the Pinakothek, Munich.

representative of Buckingham. These negotiations were of course passed on to the King.

On the 28th September, 1628, Olivares laid the matter, as reported by Rubens and Endymion Porter, before the Junta, by whom it was discussed, and Rubens was called in to give an account of all the letters that had passed through his hands. The council agreed that these communications should be followed up.

At this juncture news arrived of the assassination of Buckingham, on the 23rd of August, at Portsmouth. One difficulty was thus removed, for Olivares had had a private and personal dislike for Charles's Minister ever since his mad journey to Madrid about the ill-fated Spanish match, as well as a distrust of him in his public capacity. The Court of Madrid was now anxious to find out whether the attitude of the English Court towards them remained the same. The Infanta was instructed to gain all the information she could. Don Carlos Coloma, formerly Ambassador in England and now Governor of Cambray, wrote to some of his old friends, Cottington and Weston, who confirmed what Porter had already divulged—that Buckingham, in sending him, had acted by the King's orders.

Whilst these negotiations were going on, the diplomatist having to wait, the artist Rubens was fully employed. A story is told of him in this connection which, if not true, conveys a truth. When at a little later period he was in England, he was one morning discovered by a courtier, who went to call on him, busy painting. "Ho!" says he, "does his most Catholic Majesty's representative amuse himself with painting?" "No," answered Rubens, "the artist sometimes amuses himself with diplomacy." At this time he painted five portraits of the King, one of which

represented him on horseback, "much," he says, "to his (the King's) taste and satisfaction, who truly was extremely delighted with the picture; and to my judgment, this prince is endowed with the noblest parts. I already know him well, since I have a room in the palace, and he comes to see me every day. I have likewise done the heads of all the royal family carefully, with much convenience in their presence, for my mistress the Infanta." He painted several other portraits, some pictures from nature, and copies of all the Titians in the royal galleries. He executed, according to Señor Villaamil, more than forty pictures of various kinds; besides which, he sold the King eight, which he had brought from Antwerp. The story is told, but it seems on doubtful authority, that Duke John of Braganza, who afterwards became King John IV. of Portugal, invited him to Villaviciosa. Rubens accepted the invitation, and started with a large retinue of Spanish and Flemish nobles and attendants. The Duke was frightened at the number, and made off to Lisbon, sending word to the painter that affairs of State required his presence elsewhere, and forwarding him a purse of fifty pistoles to defray the expenses to which he had put him. Rubens received the message and returned the purse, saying that he was sorry to lose the opportunity of saluting the prince; but as for money, he did not wish to be an expense to him, and had brought a thousand pistoles to defray his necessities.

Another story, told by Van Hasselt, must be attributed to this period, if it too is to be believed at all. Overtaken by night, Rubens took shelter in a monastery, in the church of which he was greatly struck the next morning by a picture about which he could get no information. The monks were silent when he asked the name of the artist,

and at length one of them said that the painter was dead to the world—he had become a monk. Rubens laughed at this and said he was too good to be lost—he must be brought out from his hiding-place and shown to the world. The monk fell fainting, and died soon after. He was Xavier Collantes, the painter of the picture.

Early in 1629 the Abbé Scaglia came to Spain as Envoy from the Duke of Savoy. He was most anxious, now the French had taken Rochellè, that they should not find the rest of Europe divided, and so easy a prey to them; consequently he urged upon Olivares an understanding with England. In addition to this came, in April, Weston's despatch to Coloma, which made it more apparent than ever that if the King of Spain would send an Envoy to London, Charles would despatch an Ambassador to Madrid. Olivares determined to give this commission to Rubens. The painter had hoped, when his work was over in Madrid, to visit Italy, whither he had greatly longed to go, but without avail, since he left it so suddenly in 1609. He had the Infanta's permission, and had determined to visit his friend Peiresc in Provence on the way. An end was now put to all this. Rubens was nominated secretary of the Privy Council of the Netherlands on the 27th of April, 1629, and on the 29th he left Madrid with full instructions for London.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN ENGLAND.

1629 AND 1630.

RUBENS traversed France with the utmost celerity, journeying night and day. He was at Paris on the 10th of May, and in Brussels on the morning of the 13th. Having heard in the meantime of a peace between England and France, signed on the 24th of April, the Infanta hurried him on, so that he had scarcely time to visit his house and to see his children, whom he had left under the care of his old friend Gevaerts. Rubens was at Dunkirk by the 28th of May. Charles was no less anxious to hurry on the negotiations, and wrote with his own hand to the captain of the vessel who was to convey him from Dunkirk, instructing him, if there was any delay, not to wait for the Marquis de Ville, the French Ambassador, whom he was to carry across the continent, but to fetch the man he was to meet there. The person of the Envoy, too, was very agreeable to Charles, who had an extensive collection of pictures, and who, even in his greatest lack of money for public purposes, had lately contrived to buy the Duke of Mantua's remarkable collection of statues and pictures, which Rubens knew so well. The latter, with his brother-in-law, Henry Brandt, who was co-secretary with Gevaerts

THE REPOSE IN EGYPT.

From an engraving after a drawing by Rubens.

to the Council of Antwerp, arrived in London on the 5th of June, and stayed at the house of Gerbier, who had been ordered by the King to make him his guest, and who was afterwards paid all his expenses. At a later period (during the Protectorate), Gerbier lived at Bethnal Green, where he opened a lecture hall; but we can hardly suppose that at this time he lived so far from the Court, and in a place *out of town*, as this green then was. On the 6th Rubens had an interview with Charles at Greenwich, where he showed his credentials, heard the King's views, and showed him how it was impossible for Spain to make any promises about the Palatinate, because she had but small influence with the Emperor, in whose hands the matter lay. Charles sent Rubens to Weston, whom he visited the same day, and with whom he saw Sir Francis Cottington, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the future Envoy to Spain. To these he delivered the letters with which he had been charged by Olivares. The Earl of Carlisle gave a State dinner in his honour. The Ambassadors of Venice and Holland tried what they could to counteract the effect of Rubens's proposals; but he had audiences with the King, and interviews with the above-named Ministers, who, with the Earl of Pembroke, were appointed to negotiate with him. These audiences he describes in despatches to Olivares.

On one of his journeys to Greenwich, Rubens narrowly escaped a considerable peril. Barozzi, the Duke of Savoy's secretary, was conducting his chaplain to the palace, when, in shooting London Bridge, a very dangerous process in the days of the old structure, the boat was upset by the movement of one of the passengers; the chaplain was drowned, and Barozzi was only pulled out by his spur as he was going down the third time.

Whilst in London Rubens had another difficulty. His most Catholic Majesty, the stern represser of all heresy in his own dominions, was willing enough to encourage heresy, accompanied by rebellion, which might serve to harass the French government, and was therefore content to subsidize the Huguenots. For this purpose Rubens received bills of exchange, which he was to give to Soubise, the brother of the Duke de Rohan, the great Huguenot leader, provided the King of England would give the latter an opportunity of providing himself with men and ships. The Infanta Isabella could not believe that Charles, who had just concluded a treaty with Louis XIII., could immediately assist rebels against his power, so she made use of these bills of exchange for the necessities of the war in the Netherlands. But she did not know Charles. Soubise, who was in London, heard from the Abbé Scaglia that Rubens had this money for him, and could not understand how it was he did not receive it. Rubens wrote earnestly to Olivares to have the bills of exchange renewed. These did not come for some time, and when they did arrive Louis XIII. had concluded a peace with his discontented subjects.

The despatches that Rubens wrote to Madrid excited so much interest there, that they were translated into Spanish (he usually wrote in Italian), and sent to Vienna, where they are still to be found. His position was a difficult one. Philip could not grant all that Charles required, but he did not wish the negotiations to be broken off: so Rubens had to use his utmost prudence. At length the Ambassador was agreed on. Cottington was to go to Madrid, and Coloma was to come to London. The French Ambassador arrived on the 5th of July. Rubens was afraid that his coming would make a difference in the terms, and per-

suaded Charles to let him have in writing what he had previously said to him in words. In this declaration the King promised not to make any league with France to the prejudice of Spain. Rubens was enjoined to be secret about this note. He was not even to let Barozzi know of it, and Charles trusted to Olivares's generosity not to make any use of it with Richelieu. An emissary from the latter had already arrived in London, and was making propositions hostile to Spain, which were revealed to Rubens. The latter speaks of the nobles in England as being crippled with debt; they were very hospitable, but poor, and so open to bribery. About the same time he writes to his friend Dupuy to the following effect:—"If I had in my youth visited as many countries and as many Courts in a short time, it would have been more useful to me than at my present age. My body would have been more robust to bear the inconvenience of posting, and my mind, by the experience and knowledge of different peoples, would have been capable of greater things in the future. Now no more energy remains in my body, and I shall have no more time to enjoy the fruit of so many fatigues. I shall only die the wiser. Nevertheless, I console myself with thinking on the beautiful things I have seen on my journey. This island, for example, seems to me a theatre worthy of the curiosity of a man of taste, not only on account of the pleasantness of the place and the beauty of the nation, and the magnificence of the external civilization, which appears to me extreme, as of a people rich and luxuriating in peace of long standing, but rather on account of the incredible quantity of excellent pictures and antique statues, and inscriptions, which are to be found in this Court." He goes on to particularize the Arundel collec-

tion, and to speak of Selden's knowledge of antiquities, and regrets his (as he thinks) mistaken devotion to politics.

Rubens won the hearts of all in London. The Ministers write most favourably of him to Madrid; the King was delighted with him; the report given of him by the Spanish Ambassador in Paris is most flattering; whilst the Junta highly approved of his despatches. On the 17th of August, Rubens learnt that Coloma was definitely appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to treat for peace. He immediately went to Charles, who was at Whitelands, to inform him. In the meantime, the Ambassadors of France, Holland, and Venice did their best to prevent the departure of Cottington, and to induce Charles to join the league against Spain. Their proceedings were betrayed to Rubens, who was also able to inform his Court of the French intrigues in Northern Italy, and of the seizing of Susa. Barozzi, with whom he had lived on most intimate terms since he had been in England, in the altered state of the politics of his country, was now recalled. Rubens, however, gave him letters of recommendation to the Infanta, but he refused to interfere further, or to assist the Abbé Scaglia.

During this autumn, in the interval of some of those lengthy negotiations, Rubens journeyed to Cambridge, where he was received by the Chancellor of the University, Lord Holland, and with his brother-in-law, Henry Brandt, and some distinguished Frenchmen, he was admitted to the honorary degree of Master of Arts. At the end of October, the King was persuaded to sign Cottington's commission, and he set off four days afterwards. But even now another hitch occurred. The Dutch had just taken Wesel, and Philip was anxious to retain Coloma in the Nether-

lands, to command the forces there. He wrote to the Infanta to send some one else who would be agreeable to the English. Weston, not knowing the cause of the delay, was furious, and orders were sent to Cottington not to present his credentials until he heard that the Spanish Ambassador was in London. Meanwhile Philip thought he could dispense with Coloma, and sent orders for him to proceed; but various delays made it the 7th January, 1630, before he arrived at Dover, whither Henry Brandt had been despatched to receive him on the 26th December. On the 11th he made his public entry; and on the 15th had his first audience at Whitehall.

Rubens, who had some time before obtained leave to depart on the arrival of the Ambassador, now hoped to get away; but he was detained by Coloma for six weeks longer. In the early days of March he was preparing to set out, and went to take leave of the King and Queen. On the 3rd of March, the King knighted him at Whitehall, and at the same time presented him with the sword with which he had received the accolade, together with a diamond ring, a gold chain, and a band for his hat; an augmentation to his arms of a lion or on a canton gules was also granted.

He left London on the 6th of March, having at the last moment tried to sound Joachimi, the Dutch Minister, on the disposition of the United Provinces towards a truce or peace. He did not, however, learn much. On reaching the Netherlands, he received two favours from the Infanta as a testimony of her approval of his zeal and success. He was allowed to have the benefits of his appointment as secretary of the Privy Council without executing the duties and before he took the oath, and the reversion of this office was granted to his elder son, Albert. The

Infanta had already, by her active influence, secured to him the payment of 7,500 florins, due for the eight pictures which Philip IV. had bought of him when he was in Madrid.

During the time of his sojourn in England Rubens painted several pictures. One, now in the National Gallery, was on the subject then nearest to his heart as a diplomatist, 'Peace and War.' This was left with Charles I., and on the dispersion of the King's pictures, it found its way to Italy, where it remained in the hands of the Doria family at Genoa until the beginning of this century. Being then purchased, and again brought to England, it was after a time presented by the Marquis of Stafford to the National Collection. No doubt in this case Rubens's indulgence in allegory led to many an explanation of the subject, and a discussion of the political question. Rubens also painted Charles I. as St. George, with Henrietta Maria as Cleolinde, with a view of Richmond in the distance; but the allegory in this case was not happy. This picture is now at Windsor, having been bought by George IV. from the Orleans collection.

Another commission that he now received, was to decorate the ceiling of the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall, the only part of Inigo Jones's magnificent design that was completed. The subject chosen was the apotheosis of James I.! One would fancy that even the imagination of a Rubens would quail before such a portentous endeavour. He had been designated to do this work some time before, but probably the matter was not finally settled until his arrival in England. The sketches as usual were made on the spot by his own hand; some of these are now in England and some at St. Petersburg. The pictures themselves

RUBENS AND HIS SECOND WIFE, HELENA FOURMENT.

From the painting by Rubens at Blenheim.

were completed and packed before August, 1634, but it appears they were not forwarded for more than a year longer, owing to a delay with regard to money, and the unwillingness of Charles to pay some custom-house duties. Before they started Rubens had them opened "to retouch and mend the cracks caused by their being rolled up almost a whole year." They finally arrived in London in October, 1635. The payments were made by instalments, and it was not until the spring of 1638 that the whole amount of £3,000 had been paid for them.

Rubens had originally intended to go to England to put these pictures in their places, but he gave up the idea, fearing the gout, which now frequently oppressed him. They have remained in the same spot ever since, but not in the same condition. In James II.'s time they were restored and painted on, and the same process has been repeated at least twice since, so that not much remains to show us what they were like when they left the studio of the painter.

How Rubens was employed during the remainder of the year 1630 we know not. In September he lost his friend the Marquis of Spinola, of whom he says, "J'ai perdu en sa personne un des plus grans amys et patrons que j'avoys du monde comme je puis tesmoigner par une centurie de cette lettres." Some of his earlier biographers interpose another journey to Madrid, but of this there are no records, and it does not seem probable that it could have occurred without leaving some sign in the numerous documents relating to this time. At the end of the year, on the 6th of December, in the forbidden period of Advent, the widower of fifty-three married again: this time a girl of sixteen, Helena Fourment, the daughter of his former wife's

sister. She was very beautiful, according to Rubens's notions of beauty, and was introduced by him into a great number of his pictures.

In the following year he served as dean of St. Luke's guild, and on his petition, and at the recommendation of the Supreme Council for Flanders at Madrid (who quoted the precedent of Titian), the knighthood conferred on him by Charles I. was confirmed by his own government.

Fresh complications in the Court of France soon gave further employment to the painter-diplomatist. When Maria de' Medici fled from the power of Richelieu into the Spanish Netherlands she appointed the Marquis de la Vieuville to confer with the representative of the Infanta with regard to her affairs, and in consequence of his previous intimate knowledge of the Queen, Rubens was appointed by the Infanta to hold communications with the Queen's representative. The consequent negotiations must have given him employment for many months.

After this, in April, 1632, Rubens was anxious for rest, and he therefore obtained leave to return to his own home. He did not, however, remain long unemployed, for the successes of Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, alarmed the Infanta, and in August Rubens was again sent to Liège, to see if he could not obtain terms. In this he was unsuccessful, but he continued to watch the negotiations, but we do not hear of his doing much in the matter after this. The conferences came to no conclusion, and the war continued.

CHAPTER IX.

LAST YEARS.

1634 TO 1640.

ON the 1st of December, 1634, the Infanta Isabella died, very generally beloved by the people over whom she had ruled for a period altogether of more than thirty-five years. No one felt the loss more than Rubens, to whom she had been a good friend from the time when he was first introduced to her by Van Veen. Henceforth he seems to have taken no active part in politics. The loss of his patroness, and his increasing infirmity arising from attacks of gout, all contributed to this result. He had learnt by long experience, he said, when writing about the delay of payment for his Whitehall pictures, but with a reference also to the wars with which Europe was embroiled, "how much easier it is for princes to do evil than to do good."

Rubens's visits, first to Madrid and then to London, and the constant change of residence, owing to his various employments for some time afterwards, seem to have broken in upon his correspondence with Dupuy and Peiresc. This was afterwards renewed, but scarcely with the same vigour as before. Somewhere about this time he seems to have bought his château of Steen at Elewyt, between

Vilvorde and Mechlin. Here he spent much time (he talks of having been there for some months): and here he painted many landscapes, for we have the château delineated from many points of view. At this period too the gout began to attack him more frequently and with greater violence: in his painting he was obliged to use a mahl-stick, a thing he had never done before, and to confine himself almost entirely to easel-pictures.

Philip IV. now had to appoint a governor for the Netherlands, and naturally enough he chose his own brother, the Cardinal Infanta Ferdinand, who was then at Milan. Before taking possession of his new post, the latter joined the King of Hungary in Germany, and their combined troops, under Ferdinand, attacked the Swedes and their allies at Nördlingen. The victory fell to the Imperialists, and the Cardinal Infanta was enabled to march on with his troops through Germany to the Netherlands. Thus he entered upon his government covered with glory. A short time after his arrival in May, 1635, he intimated his intention of coming to Antwerp. These solemn entries had always been made opportunities for great rejoicing and festivity. When Albert and Isabella had made a similar progress at the beginning of their government, Van Veen had been entrusted to design the decorations. In those days there had been many artists to choose from. Now, Antwerp possessed one citizen, eminent beyond all others. Sir Peter Paul Rubens, a painter of European reputation, a diplomatist, a courtier, and a gentleman, recognized and rewarded at the Courts of Madrid, Brussels, London, and Paris, was of course the person on whom such a duty must devolve. He chose his friends Gevaerts and Rockox to assist him, and with their help he set to

THE CHATEAU DE STEEN.

From the engraving by Bolswert.

work with diligence and completed designs for several triumphal arches and ornamental temples, on which were displayed a vast number and variety of pictures, statues, and allegorical designs. These of course were produced by his pupils. The whole work was of such a permanent nature, that it was afterwards engraved and published with an elaborate and learned Latin commentary by his friend Gevaerts—though this was not ready for the press till the year after Rubens's death. The designs are as vast and as multifarious as the series for the Luxembourg Gallery, and while the glories of Ferdinand form of course the main topic, Rubens's old patroness the Infanta Isabella shone forth in an apotheosis.

When the actual day of the entry arrived, the designer of the procession and the adornments was not able to see the effect of his completed work. His old enemy the gout had made him a prisoner in his house, but this afforded an opportunity to the new governor of showing his affability and condescension by visiting the sick painter in his own home—where he had previously been honoured with the presence of the Archduke Albert, Queen Maria de' Medici, the Infanta Isabella, and other great personages.

Of one more picture of importance do we hear at the end of our painter's life, and this too, strangely enough connects us with the beginning of it. Rubens received a commission to paint an altar-piece from George Geldorp, a Flemish painter and picture-dealer settled in London. This order surprised Rubens, for he could not imagine that the English heretics, even under Laud's training, had yet arrived at the point of requiring such altar-pieces as he would be likely to paint. He discovered, however, that the commission originally came from a Mr. Jabach, of Cologne. Rubens was very

pleased at this order, and proposed (probably knowing that the picture was for St. Peter's church) to represent the crucifixion of St. Peter with his feet upwards, an opportunity for a remarkable treatment. He adds, "I am greatly affectioned to the city of Cologne, for I was brought up there until the tenth year of my life" (not quite a direct statement that he was born there, but near enough to mislead those who had no information about the Siegen episode). The picture was painted slowly and at intervals, during the last years of the painter's life. At first he asked for a year and a half, but the picture was not finished at the end of that period, for when he died it was still in his studio. It is, however, one of his masterpieces, and a remarkable instance of his powerful conception. The apostle, who is being nailed to the cross, is surrounded by six executioners, the physical pain and distension of the veins, consequent on the unnatural position, being strongly delineated. The work is still on the site originally designed for it at St. Peter's church, Cologne. Rubens was no longer able to superintend the placing and lighting of his pictures, about which he had shown himself so anxious in his earlier days at Rome, and he was unable to see this after it was fixed.

The last information we have about the great actor now about to retire from this world's stage is a kindly note, written to congratulate his friend and pupil, the ivory carver, Lucas Faid'herbe, on his marriage, on the 1st May, 1640. "On May-day you have planted your may." On the 31st of the same month, Gerbier, writing from Brussels, says, "Sr Peter Rubens is deadly sick: The Phisitians of this Towne (Brussels) being sent unto him for to trye their best skill on him." He was already dead, having

departed this life the day before. In a postscript of a letter of the same date to King Charles, Gerbier says, "Since I finisht this letter, newes is come of Sr Pieter Rubens death. Many fine things wil be sould in his Almoneda (public sale.)"

In Antwerp the news ran from mouth to mouth, "*Rubens is dood.*" Every one mourned as a friend the man who had been its greatest citizen. The Chamber of Rhetoric of the Violet, one of the literary clubs of Antwerp; the guild of St. Luke, the association to which all artists of every kind belonged; the more select society of the Romanists; the Company of Arquebusiers, all assembled to pay their last respects to their late member. The funeral, as was the custom of the time, took place at night. It was attended by all the principal people of Antwerp—the magistrates, the various religious orders, sixty orphans each carrying a light, the above-named societies, and a crowd of noblemen, merchants, and citizens. The body was temporarily placed in the vault of the Fourment family. It was afterwards removed, on the 4th of March, 1642, to a special chapel built out from the church of St. James for its reception.

The accounts of the expenses of the funeral are interesting, from the light they throw upon the habits of the times. They are given at length in Verachter's "Tombeau de Rubens." From this source we find that the family dined together at the "Arms of France;" the magistrates and their officers at the "Hotel de Ville;" the Romanists at the "Fleur d'Or;" the corporations of St. Luke and the Violet, thirty-four in number, at the "Stag." Alms were distributed through various channels, and large sums were devoted to masses. The painter's wardrobe sold for 1,095 florins 1 sol.

roundings; these were, principally, either such as allowed of the introduction of numerous figures, and were susceptible of considerable magnificence in the treatment, such as the "Adoration of the Magi," and of the "Shepherds," and the various scenes connected with the death of Christ; or they were those which required the delineation of the stronger passions, as "Lot's daughters" or "Susanna." He was especially fond of painting the Virgin, mostly with the Child, and often with attendant cherubs, which latter he evidently painted very lovingly; but the main figure usually represents a fat woman with no particular refinement or elevation of character. His saints are mostly decorative, grand, massive figures, and—but that they have their distinctive emblems—might easily be interchanged in many cases; there is no expression of countenance which tells its own tale, or conveys a lesson to the beholder. His legendary pictures are especially indicative of his tone of mind—they delineate some impossible story with the calmest particularity; no difficulties are softened down, no spiritual meaning indicated; they seem to say, in its simplest meaning, the paradox "I believe, because it is impossible." His allegorical and historical pictures are not nearly so realistic as his legendary; they show immense imagination and a very large amount of learning, especially in classical antiquities. Probably it would be found by one well-acquainted with the antique gems, that his ideas were influenced by those works of which he was a great connoisseur and collector. Genre painting he seems only to have taken up occasionally, just to show that he could excel in this as in other branches. He has painted a Kermesse with as much delicacy of manipulation, and as much coarseness of feeling as is shown in anything that

hardly fail to appreciate his wonderful superiority as a painter. Those to whom the motive of a picture is of more importance than its execution, are not likely, in the nineteenth century, to appreciate the peculiar religious standpoint, the taste for mythology and allegory, and above all the sensuous enjoyment of mere animal life that belonged to the seventeenth century. Besides, England is not the country in which Rubens is fairly to be judged, not because it does not possess many most beautiful pictures, but because they are principally smaller ones, and these to a great extent scattered about in private collections. One ought to visit the Louvre, Antwerp, Brussels, and, chief of all, Munich, before allowing oneself to form a very decided opinion on his merits. His pictures range under the following branches: religious (which are so numerous that in the catalogues they are subdivided into Old Testament subjects, New Testament subjects, Virgins, Saints, and Legendary), historical, allegorical, genre, landscape, and still life. He says of himself, "I confess myself to be, by a natural instinct, better fitted to execute works of the largest size rather than little curiosities. Every one according to his gifts; my talent is such that never yet has an undertaking, however extraordinary in size or diversity of subjects, daunted my courage." This judgment of himself is far more true than such opinions are apt to be. But although many of his works are on the largest scale, he has left paintings that would compare in minuteness of work with those of the Dutch painters, and he constantly supervised the engraving of his own pictures, making alterations five or six times.

In his scriptural subjects Rubens had certain favourites, which he painted over and over again with different sur-

Teniers or Ostade ever did. Still-life he did not altogether pass over, but he seems to have left a great deal of this kind of work, which appears in his pictures, to his assistants and pupils. Portraits he painted with a feeling akin to that of his friend and pupil Van Dyck. Certainly in some of these works he shows more delicacy and sympathy than in any of his larger and more striking compositions. The portrait of his mother in the Dulwich Gallery, the "Spanish Hat" in the National Gallery, and the portrait called "General Velasquez," which appeared in the Exhibition of Old Masters at Burlington House in 1879, are three that could scarcely be excelled by any master of any time. In landscape we English especially owe an immense debt to Rubens, for he first introduced such works to us, and it is from his language that our name for this branch of painting is said to be derived. The landscapes of Rubens indicate an intense love of home scenery, of country life, of extensive views, and of that indefinable charm which we call the picturesque. To say that he did not care for the grandeur of mountain scenery or the intricacy of elaborate skies, is simply to recall the fact that he lived in the seventeenth, and not the nineteenth century. Rubens began his life in the studio of a landscape painter, and in his later days, when he painted more for his own amusement than according to the wish of others, he returned naturally to that for which he probably had most natural talent, but which he cultivated but little, because it was less appreciated by his contemporaries.

His method of painting was his own. We have seen how he shrank from being supposed to paint like the Spanish. Some of his fellow-countrymen, who were jealous of him, said he did not use paints, but coloured

varnishes, and that his pictures would not last. Of the latter point we are the better judges. He used light grounds, almost if not quite white; his outlines were drawn with a brush in colour (often red for the flesh), and very transparent glazes were laid over all the shadows, the lights being sometimes, not always, painted thicker. He exposed his pictures to the sun for short spaces of time, between the paintings, to dry out the oil. They received several coats of colour, and then finally he put in the stronger touches himself, the light ones now thick. All his works, however, do not seem to have been done in this way, but many have solid painting from the first.

It was his habit to make a sketch in colours on a small scale first; this was handed to a pupil or assistant to be executed on a larger scale, and carried forward, usually under the master's eye, almost up to the last stage; Rubens himself sometimes interfering, and making changes even in the position of the figures, during the progress. Finally he went over the whole, leaving his own impress upon the work.

The great strength of Rubens lay in his exuberant imagination, his sense of animal life, his extensive knowledge of antiquity and of the world, and his immense technical ability. His weakness was a failure of dramatic power, and a want of perception of spiritual life. He could imagine any number of different ways in which an event could take place; he could place his figures in different positions, clothe them with any variety of costume, and introduce mythological and religious emblems and personages, but he could only realize in a general way the impressions that individual feelings would produce; delicate shades of feeling would be lost upon him, and incongruities

THE RAINBOW.

would be unobserved. Again, he painted while standing or walking about his magnificent studio, in the midst of his band of assistants and pupils, listening to the oratorical sentences of an ancient author; not like Fra Angelico, on his knees, in an ecstasy of devotion, realizing the unseen, supported by angels. He was a courtier, a gentleman, a man of education, and a man of the world. His religion was that of his priest, his politics those of the Infanta. His father died in exile for listening to new doctrines; his city had been ruined by opposition to the power of Spain. His only strong feeling was in favour of peace, and that even he could lay aside when there was a good chance of humbling the power of France. His sense of animal life is truthfully recorded in the words of Tobie Matthew, suggested no doubt by the painter himself: "In this Peece the beasts are all alive, and in act either of escape or resistance, in the expressing whereof, Snyder doth infinitelie come short of Rubens."

His technical ability, in spite of occasional carelessness in drawing, has been praised by innumerable artists, and notably so by Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose lectures and diary are filled with references to his work. The present condition of his pictures which have escaped the ravages of cleaners and restorers, testifies to his knowledge of the art of colouring; and the vast body of pupils who learned to paint for him in such a way as not to have their work distinguished from his, bear witness in the same direction; for the old legal maxim *qui facit per alium facit per se*, holds good in this case. Altogether, then, we may fairly say that Sir Peter Paul Rubens was one of the great band of men of Low German race who, at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, brought into

the front rank, as a new power in the world, the countries to which they belonged. Rubens was *par excellence* the painter of the group that included the heroes of the Dutch Republic: and, like many of his contemporaries, whilst excelling in his own line, he was, in other respects also, a great man, in a time of and among great men.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF PETER PAUL RUBENS.

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[1] In this exhaustive catalogue Mr. Smith mentions no less than 1789 works by Rubens. It is impossible to give such a list in this volume.